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A

FAMILIAR SURVEY

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

AND OF HISTORY,

AS CONNECTED WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY, AND WITH ITS PROGRESS TO THE PRESENT TIME.

INTENDED PRIMARILY FOR THE USE OF

YOUNG PERSONS OF EITHER SEX,

DURING THE COURSE OF

PUBLIC OR OF PRIVATE EDUCATION.

BY THOMAS GISBORNE, A. M.

"Jesus saith to Peter....Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me?....He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my Lambs."..... *John* xxi. 15.

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TO THE REVEREND

BENJAMIN HEATH, D. D.

FELLOW OF ETON COLLEGE, ETC.

DEAR SIR,

IF I venture to assert that more than customary attention might advantageously be allotted to the inculcation of Christian principles and knowledge on the youth of this country; let me not be thought desirous of loading their instructors with harsh and indiscriminate censure.

My own personal experience might lead me to a more equitable conclusion. Nearly six of the earlier years of my education were consigned to the care of a clergyman;* whose life exemplified the religious lessons, which he endeavoured to impress on his pupils. The years intervening between private tuition and the university were passed at the very eminent public school,† over which you then presided. I recollect with pleasure that the head class, which was under your immediate superintendence, was regularly occupied during one morning in the common days of the week in the study of some book of a religious nature. Nor was this the only effort pointed to the

* The Rev. John Pickering, of Mackworth, near Derby.
† At Harrow on the Hill.

same end in the conduct of the school. But I fear that many young persons, if summoned from seminaries of repute to a public examination, would give a better account of the fabled wanderings of Ulysses and Æneas than of the heaven-directed journeyings of Moses and Saint Paul; and would display a more intimate acquaintance with the fortunes of Athens and Rome, than with the historical progress of a religion designed to be their supreme comfort and guide through life, and the means of acquiring eternal happiness.

The principal fault, when faults exist, is not in the preceptor, but in the parent. The former is to water the plant; the latter must sow the seed. But how often does the parent limit his concern for the best interests of his children to the decorum of mere morals: without impressing on their minds, perhaps without feeling on his own, a firm and habitual conviction, that there is no stable foundation on which morality can rest except a Christian fear and love of God! How often does the parent expend his solicitude in unremitting efforts to fit his children for worldly eminence; to prepare them to make their way as politicians, as merchants, as followers of lucrative professions; to be skilful seamen, intrepid soldiers, men of learning, of taste, of accomplishments, and what the world is pleased to call "men of honour:" regardless of the duty of train-

ing them up as servants of a God of holiness, and disciples of a crucified Saviour!

A work intended to facilitate the attainment of the most important knowledge will experience, I am confident, your favourable acceptance. I offer it to you with additional satisfaction, as it affords to me an opportunity of conveying to you an assurance that I retain a grateful remembrance of your instructions.

I am,

DEAR SIR,

Your obliged and faithful servant,

THOMAS GISBORNE.

YOXALL LODGE, NEAR LICHFIELD,

Nov. 11, 1799.

PREFACE.

AMONG persons who are convinced that youth, the spring-time of life, is the season when the seeds which are to occupy and fill the heart are to be sown; and who regard the acquisition of eternal happiness through Jesus Christ as the great object of human existence; it is a common, and, I fear, a just complaint, that in any mode of education sufficient attention is too seldom devoted to religion.

Of late years much has been done, and ably done, to facilitate the communication of religious knowledge to youth. Many excellent elementary works, having for their object the explanation of scriptural history and scriptural doctrines, in a manner at once instructive and engaging to the opening mind of the pupil, have been given to the public: and they have been re-

ceived with the gratitude which the writers merited. Let me not be suspected of a disposition to detract from the value of those works, the circulation and use of which I wish to see every day more widely extended, when I venture to observe, that an additional treatise on a plan somewhat enlarged has appeared to me to be wanting; a treatise which might fitly intervene between the perusal of books of the class to which I have alluded, and the ample range of reading scarcely to be expected but from the leisure and industry of manhood. The deficiency which I conceived to exist, I have endeavoured in the following pages to supply.

My intention has been to lay before the reader a familiar and compendious view of the Christian religion, and of the principal historical events connected with its introduction and progress, its corruption and reformation: including a concise account of the scriptures of the old and new Testaments, and a summary of the evidences of the truth of Christianity, together with some remarks

on forms of church-government and religious establishments. Bearing in mind that I have been addressing myself to natives of Great Britain ; I have been solicitous to draw the attention of the reader, wherever the subject afforded a fit opportunity, to events or circumstances which have had a particular influence on his own country ; and by rendering him acquainted with the principles on which its religious institutions are established, to guard him betimes from being hastily prejudiced against those institutions by misrepresentations or groundless objections. I have endeavoured, on suitable occasions, to obviate, without entering too deeply into argument, some of those cavils of scepticism and infidelity which a young person may probably hear ; and thus to lead him to withhold implicit confidence from others, which he may afterwards have to encounter. Throughout the whole work it has been my predominant desire to direct the acquisition of knowledge to its proper purpose ; the establishment and confirmation of Christian views, motives, and practice through life.

I may trust that the candour of the public, which I have repeatedly experienced respecting other works, will be extended to the present, perhaps, more humble, yet I would hope, under the blessing of God, not less useful attempt. My objects in drawing up this performance would be abundantly answered, if it should be deemed worthy of being placed as a manual in the hands of the youth of both sexes during their education at home or in public seminaries. I am also willing to persuade myself that it may prove a convenient summary to many persons of all ages, when they happen not to have leisure and opportunity for the perusal of larger works.

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A

FAMILIAR SURVEY.

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

CHAPTER I.

SUMMARY VIEW OF THE STATE OF MANKIND FROM THE CREATION OF THE WORLD TO THE CALLING OF ABRAHAM.

THE establishment of Christianity was the great object to which the several dispensations of Divine Providence, intervening between the creation of the world and the birth of Christ, were designed to be subservient. If therefore we are solicitous clearly to comprehend the nature of the Christian Religion, and fully to perceive the magnitude of the blessings which it offers to every person who sincerely embraces and faithfully obeys it; our attention ought in the first place to be directed to the original situation of the parents of the human race; and to those successive events, whether in the extraordinary dealings of God with man, or in the civil history of particular nations, which were evidently calculated to prepare the way for the advent of the great Redeemer.

God,* saith the scripture, created man in his own image. Wherein did this resemblance of man to his Maker consist? The answer to that question must be derived from the sacred writings. The true explanation of the counsels of God can be obtained only from the word of God. Some persons, observing that after the Almighty had said, "Let "us make man in our own image

* Gen. i. 27.

image, after our likeness," he immediately subjoined; "and let them have dominion "over the fish of the sea, "and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and "over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that "creepeth upon the earth;"* have concluded that the image of God impressed upon man consisted in the sovereign authority delegated to mankind over the whole inferior creation. This opinion may not be destitute of truth. Yet it seems to overlook the principal circumstance indicated by the expression under consideration. The most distinguishing characteristic of the Supreme Being is holiness. And we have scriptural grounds for inferring, that the primitive uprightness and purity of man was the feature in his soul, which constituted his likeness to his Maker. St. Paul, exhorting the Ephesians to labour for that radical change of heart which Christianity requires in her followers; a change from the corrupt frame of mind natural to fallen man, to one resembling the state of innocence and happiness in which Adam was created; uses these remarkable words: "Put on the new man, which after God" (that is, after the image of God) "is created in right-"eousness and true holiness."† And when addressing his Colossian converts on the same subject, "Ye," saith he, "have put on the new man, which is renewed "in knowledge," (the knowledge of righteousness,) "after the image of him that created him."‡ The resemblance therefore which man originally bore to God consisted chiefly if not entirely in holiness and righteousness, similar in kind, though infinitely inferior in degree, according to the distance between the Creator and the created, to the holiness and righteousness of his heavenly Father.

But this blessed state was of short continuance. Ensnared by the Devil, who is repeatedly denominated in the Scriptures "the Old Serpent, Satan," (the Adversary,) "who deceiveth the whole world;"§ and is expressly declared by our Saviour to have been a "mur-"derer from the beginning, the father of lies, who

* Gen. i. 26. † Ephes. iv. 24. ‡ Rev. xii. 9. and xx. 2.
§ Coloss. iii. 10.

"abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him;"* our first parents concurred in breaking that single commandment, the observance of which God had enjoined as the test of their obedience. They ate of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; that fruit which taught them the difference between good and evil, by rendering them acquainted with evil, which until that hour they never had known. Thus they annulled the covenant between them and their Maker. They forfeited all claim to every blessing which they had antecedently possessed. They stripped themselves of all title to every favour, which their Creator had previously given them hopes of receiving from his bounty. For all was to depend on the steadfastness of their obedience to the original commandment. They incurred the penalty of death; the penalty, which from the beginning had been announced to them as annexed to the breach of that commandment. They became obnoxious to whatever punishment, in addition to death, the loss of their existence, the unerring justice of God should perceive to be merited by their transgressions. They lost their uprightness and purity of heart, the image and likeness of Jehovah in which they were created; and thus were become more similar in the disposition and frame of their souls to the Author of evil to whom they had submitted, than to the glorious God of holiness whom they had disobeyed.

The Supreme Being in pronouncing judgment on his guilty creatures mercifully suspended the execution of the penalty of death. Exclusive of the sentence uttered against the Serpent, the import of which will shortly be considered; he imposed on Eve the pains of child-bearing, and entire submission to the authority of her husband. On Adam he devolved the laborious cultivation of the earth, now rendered above measure productive of plants troublesome to the husbandman, and noxious to the crop. And both he expelled from the garden of Eden, lest they should put forth their hand, "and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and

* John, viii. 44.

"live for ever;"* lest by having access to the fruit of the tree of immortality they should be enabled from time to time to counteract the natural tendency of their bodies to decay, and thus hope to evade the unchangeable decree, "Dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou "return."† To prevent any rash attempt on the part of man to re-enter his original abode, God placed eastward of Paradise a fiery guard of Angels, "Cherubim "and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to "keep the way of the tree of life."‡

Perhaps you may be inclined to deem it somewhat singular, that a circumstance of a nature apparently so trivial as the eating or forbearing to eat of the fruit of a particular tree, should be selected by the Divine wisdom for the trial of the obedience of our first parents. You would have expected, it may be, some trial of a more grand and dignified cast; resembling some of those splendid demonstrations of human virtue, which history records for the admiration of the world. In the first place, however, you may be satisfied, that the mode of proof which thus surprises you was perfectly proper, because it was the mode which the Divine wisdom thought fit to select. If the temptation to transgress were in your apprehension inconsiderable; cease to wonder that one more powerful was not chosen, when you recollect that even this, weak as it was, proved capable of overcoming the religious resolution of those whom it assailed. Reflect further, in the next place, that in the situation in which Adam and Eve found themselves in Paradise; the only existing individuals of the human race; with every want anticipated; before the sight or sound of distress was known; antecedently to the introduction of arts, and of commerce, and of separate property, and of gradations of rank and power, and of all those habits and institutions of civil society which have proved, since the earth became replenished with inhabitants, the most efficacious stimulants of the passions of men, and consequently the most dangerous incentives to sin; few, if any, of those temptations, by resistance to which from

* Gen. iii. 22. † Gen. iii. 19. ‡ Gen. iii. 24.

a principle of obedience to the will of God human virtue is now to be evinced, could possibly have had an opportunity of presenting themselves.

Still however you may think that the punishment was disproportioned to the offence. So slight a transgression as the gathering a prohibited fruit to be instantly followed by the loss of Divine favour, by the forfeiture of existence, by woes and calamities reaching to the latest posterity of the offenders! Recollect then, that this punishment, great as it might be, was no new penalty demised after the transgression. It was that penalty which the transgressors, fore-warned and fully instructed, had known from the day of their creation to be already ordained as the inevitable consequence of guilt. Recollect also that the direct communication, which the Supreme Being had permitted to take place between himself and his creatures, had precluded the possibility of a doubt in the minds of Adam and Eve as to the reality of the Divine command. But you judge most erroneously in terming their transgression slight. The sin consisted not simply in gathering the fruit; but in breaking the commandment of God, who had enjoined them to abstain from it: the single commandment of him, who of his free grace had called the offenders into being; had crowned them with innumerable benefits; had put immortality and unimpairable happiness into their power, subject only to the observance of one condition; a condition so plain as to be incapable of being misunderstood, and so easy of performance as scarcely to admit the possibility of failure. The mode in which disobedience might be manifested was of little moment. The guilt was in the disobedience itself: and was evidently most heinous.

Let us now return to the judgment pronounced against the Serpent: a judgment not more full of terror to the victorious enemy of mankind than of consolation to those, whom he had degraded into a state of sin and misery. To him, under the emblem of reptile, whose instrumentality he had employed in his diabolical machinations, the Divine vengeance foretold dis-

appointment, and humiliation, and anguish, and irrecoverable destruction. A future "seed of the woman" was darkly announced; who after experiencing some temporary injury, equivalent to a bruise on the heel, from the power and malignity of the serpent, should vindicate the cause of man, and the glory of God, by a complete triumph over the adversary, by "bruising the serpent's head."

Here there was a direct intimation given to man of the great plan formed and predetermined in the divine counsels for the redemption of the human race through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; who, in reference to this predetermination, is styled in the New Testament "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."* To what extent the details of this gracious and stupendous plan were then unfolded to Adam, the Scriptures do not explain. Sufficient however was revealed to enable him to look up with humble hope, on the part of himself and of his posterity, to their future deliverer from the dominion of sin and the grave.

In process of time a first-born son and other children successively encreased the family of Adam, now no longer an inhabitant of Paradise; children born "in his own likeness, after his image," with a nature depraved, corrupt, and sinful, like that of their progenitor; not "in the likeness of God," which the Scriptures almost in the same sentence,† as though it was to prevent the possibility of mistaking the meaning in which the children of Adam were born, again aver to have been that in which Adam was originally formed. Here, according to the analogy which we still see subsisting throughout the whole living creation, in which the offspring universally inherits and partakes of the nature of the parent; man, become frail and prone to guilt, produced a race frail and prone to guilt like himself. The corrupt tree could not but bear corrupt fruit. In like manner the next generation resembled in its nature that from which it sprang. Every individual of the human race born or yet to be born, with the single ex-

* Rev. xiii. 8. † Gen. v. 1—3.

ception of our Lord Jesus Christ when he assumed the form of man, inevitably brings with him into the world the nature of fallen Adam. And "as in Adam all die, "even so in Christ" only shall any "be made alive."*— "There is none other name under heaven given among "men, whereby we must be saved."†

The radical corruption of human nature is one of those truths, which their very plainness renders it the less easy to support by formal proofs. If a person be unmoved by the decisive arguments, which press upon him every moment at every turn; you scarcely know in what manner to address him on the subject. Happily the minds of youth are not thus hardened against fair reasoning and honest conviction. They have not been familiarised with sin sufficiently to have become blind to its inherent enormity. They have not been inured by long habits of guilt to "call evil good and "good evil."‡ They are not obstructed with those prepossessions, nor intoxicated with that self-conceit, so common among persons more advanced in life; who have formed to themselves a favorite system, and examine, not all or without candour, any evidence against it. Let young persons then search the Scriptures, to see whether these things be so or not; and they will find the depravity of human nature inculcated in the strongest terms throughout the sacred writings; and inculcated not only as an undeniable fact, but as the corner stone of christianity. Let them look diligently into their own minds; and they will be convinced that the continual indisposition to righteousness and proneness to transgression, which they will discover there, can be ascribed to no other cause. Let them behold what passes in the world around them; and they will be satisfied that the prevailing wickedness of mankind can be traced to no other source. They will perceive that in this as in every other instance, reason and experience unite in bearing testimony to the truth of the word of God.

The natural effects of the fall were soon felt most severely in the family of Adam. Cain, his eldest son,

* 1 Cor. xv. 22. † Acts iv. 12. ‡ Isaiah v. 20.

murdered his own brother Abel; murdered him because the righteousness of Abel procured from heaven the acceptance of his sacrifice, while the guilt of Cain caused his offering to be rejected by the Lord. The avenging justice of God immediately drove Cain from the land; and condemned him to be a wretched vagabond on the face of the earth. Adam had to deplore, in the loss of two sons in one day, his original breach of the divine command.

By our acquaintance with the laws and the transactions of the Jews, and also with he history of different Pagan nations, we are made so familiar with the practice of sacrifices, that it does not strike our minds as singular. Yet if we regard it as a human invention, scarcely any thing can appear less capable of an easy explanation. How could any man think that to take away the life of an unoffending animal, and to consume its flesh in the fire, would be a deed calculated to procure for him the favour of God? If it be difficult to answer this case of a heathen, much more difficult is it in the case of Abel. For, as the use of flesh for food was not permitted before the deluge, to slaughter an harmless animal was an act to which Abel would be unaccustomed; and one which, unless it were commanded by the Almighty, he would probably estimate as a crime. These considerations lead us to believe that sacrifices were of divine institution; and that they were enjoined on the family of Adam and on his individual descendants, as we know that they were afterwards made a part of the religious worship of the Jewish people, principally with a view to raise their thoughts and expectations habitually to that effectual atonement, which was to be accomplished in the fulness of time by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. The use of sacrifices thus introduced would gradually extend itself among the heathen nations.

When the third generation of men had arisen upon earth, we may conclude that iniquity had arisen far and wide: for then the family of Seth, joined in all probability by others of a similar disposition, appear to have been distinguished from the rest of men on account of their adherence to the true religion, by being called

"by the name of the Lord;"* being styled according to the Hebrew idiom, the "sons," that is to say, the followers and servants, of God."† In process of time, however, the general corruption overwhelmed them also. The sons of God took to themselves wives of "the daughters of men;" the daughters of the unrighteous offspring of Cain. In consequence of these intermarriages the contagion of iniquity became universal. Husband and wife, parent and child, relation, friend and acquaintance, became the victims of, "evil communication," which from those days to the days of St. Paul, and from the days of St. Paul to the present hour, has corrupted and "corrupts good manners;"‡ and seldom more fatally than in the case of persons, who unite themselves by marriage with others whose hearts are devoid of true religion. The consequences of these most rash and dangerous connections are emphatically stated in few words by the sacred historian: "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in "the earth; and that every imagination of the thoughts "of his heart was only evil continually.—And the Lord "said, I will destroy man, whom I have created, from off "the face of the earth."§ Yet here again the Divine justice was tempered with mercy. The execution of the sentence was delayed. God declared that the days of man upon the earth, the period of trial during which the universal destruction should be postponed that opportunity might be afforded for repentance, should be one hundred and twenty years. But trial was granted in vain. The fatal period drew to its close. "God "looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt; for "all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And "God said unto Noah, the end of all flesh is come be-"fore me."‖

Though the Divine Wisdom reserves for a future life the great distribution of rewards and punishments between the righteous and the wicked; yet it frequently distinguishes even in this world the faithful servant

* Gen. iv. 26. "Then began men to call themselves by the name of the Lord"—as the verse is rightly translated in the margin of the Bible.
† Gen. vi. 2. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 33. § Gen. vi. 5—7. ‖ Gen. vi 12, 13.

of the Almighty by signal mercies and blessings, while it crushes the workers of iniquity with exemplary vengeance. Thus it was on the approach of the deluge: "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." The cause is assigned in the next verse: "Noah was a just "man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked "with God."* So likewise when God afterwards said unto Noah, "Come thou, and all thy house into the "ark;" He immediately subjoins the reason of this gracious deliverance: "for thee have I seen righteous be-"fore me in this generation."† St. Peter, speaking of the old world, characterises Noah by the appellation of "a preacher of righteousness."‡ From that expression we may conclude that he was not only an example of religion in his own private conduct, but that he publicly protested against the abandoned depravity of the human race; strenuously laboured to rouse the sinners to a conviction of their guilt; and denounced against the unrepenting world the impending judgments of God. Confiding in the merciful protection of that power whom he loved and obeyed, he entered the ark with his family; and with those individuals of the animal race, which God had brought to him that they might be preserved to replenish the earth: and "the Lord shut "him in." Then "were all the fountains of the great "deep broken up;" the ocean was heaved out of its bed by convulsions and earthquakes; and "the windows of heaven were opened:" floods of rain rushed from the sky: "the waters prevailed "exceedingly "upon the earth; and all the high hills that were un-"der the whole heaven were covered." The ark, containing the sole remnants of the human race and of the animated world, floated on the boundless deluge.

This awful testimony of the Divine indignation against sin took place, as the Scriptures expressly affirm, when Noah was six hundred years old; and, according to the common computation, one thousand six hundred and fifty seven years after the creation of the world, and two thousand three hundred and forty seven years before the birth of Jesus Christ.

* Gen. vi. 8. 9. † Gen. vii. 1. ‡ 2 Peter, ii. 5.

At the expiration of one hundred and fifty days the waters were so far abated, that the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat, in Armenia. At the end of ten weeks more the summits of the mountains appeared above the surface of the flood. At length, on the first day of the succeeding new year, Noah, after having successively sent forth a raven and a dove, that he might judge, accordingly as they should return to him or not, of the state of the ground, removed the covering of the ark; and perceived that the surface of the earth was dried. And on the twenty-seventh day of the second month, after having resided in the ark one year and some days, he and all its inhabitants, by Divine command, descended from the frail fabric, in which Omnipotence had preserved them amid the universal destruction of their fellow-creatures.

On this second father of mankind, and on his family the Supreme Being conferred blessings and privileges in most respects similar to those which he had bestowed on their first parents: confirming to them the sovereignty of the earth and of the inferior animated creation; and in one point enlarging the original grant, by permitting to them the use of animal food. To remove the apprehensions of another deluge, by which it might not be unnatural for them or their descendants to be harassed; he solemnly declared, that there never should again be a flood to destroy the earth. And with the most benignant condescension to the weakness of human faith, he further pronounced, that the rainbow, an appearance uniformly produced by drops of falling rain illuminated by the sun, was ordained to be the sign of this everlasting covenant between himself and his creatures; and when beheld by him, should for ever bring his promise to his remembrance. And in order that he might completely dissipate the suspicious fears of men, that, if not a deluge, yet some other convulsion should afterwards be commissioned to ravage the earth and extinguish their race; he made known his merciful and unalterable determination: "I will not again "curse the ground any more for man's sake—neither "will I again smite any more every thing living, as I

" have done. While the earth remaineth, seed-time and " harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease."*

Shortly after the deluge, Noah, in consequence of the difference between the conduct of his eldest and youngest sons towards him, and that of his other son Ham, was commissioned prophetically to announce to the latter the future subjection which the posterity of Canaan, the child of the offender, should experience under the descendants of Shem and Japheth ; and to foretel that signal blessings should attend the race of these two righteous men. Among the reasons for which the prophecy was emphatically detailed by Moses, we may conclude this to have been one ; that it was singularly adapted to encourage the children of Israel to carry without fear into the land of the Canaanites that impending invasion, by which the judgments proclaimed by Noah were to be accomplished.

In the days of Peleg, who was born about one hundred years after the flood, and was the fourth in descent from Shem, " the earth was divided."† Mankind, still forming one great family, speaking the same language, and journeying still towards the west, fixed themselves in the land of Shinar, or Chaldea ; and arrogantly resolved to " build themselves a city, and a tower whose " top might reach unto heaven ; and to make them- " selves a name, lest they should be scattered abroad " upon the face of the earth." Baffled in their proud design by the diversity of languages, which the Supreme Being suddenly introduced among them, as the instrument both of bringing to confusion their present enterprise, and of facilitating their dispersion into different regions where they were to become the founders of many nations ; they separated in small bodies from each other, accordingly as Providence impelled them, whether by special command, or by the familiar course of events, through which the Deity influences the proceedings of men, no less powerfully and no less efficaciously, for the furtherance of his own purposes, than by interpositions evidently miraculous. By the pos-

* Gen. viii. 22. † Gen. x. 25.

terity of Japheth, "the isles of the Gentiles" (many of the maritime countries washed by the Mediterranean sea) "were divided in their lands; every one after his "tongue, after their families, in their nations."* The descendants of Ham occupied, among other lands, Assyria, Egypt, Palestine, Chaldea, and part of Arabia. Among the possessions of the posterity of Shem, we find Persia, and other regions of the east.

By this time a striking change had been experienced in the duration of human life. Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years. His posterity before the flood appear to have passed, upon an average, nearly as large a portion of time, and some individuals even a longer period, upon earth.† Noah lived to the age of nine hundred and fifty years.‡ His son Shem fell far short of antediluvian longevity: and in the days of Peleg, man§ appears not to have attained to one half of the original measure of his existence. In succeeding generations a rapid diminution continued to take place: until at length by the time when the children of Israel came out of Egypt, and perhaps a century before their departure, the length of the pilgrimage of man upon earth was reduced nearly or altogether within the present span.

Was this event then the natural result of alterations occasioned by the deluge in the temperature of the air, the fertility of the earth, and the nutritive powers of the sustenance of man? Or was it effected by a secret change wrought in the human frame and constitution by the immediate hand of the Creator? The cause is known to God; but immaterial to us. Our concern is to draw from the fact the moral and religious instruction, which it is so well adapted to suggest; that our lives are in the hands of God, and depend for their continuance, moment after moment, solely on his will. We may also discern reasons for concluding that the shortening of the period of human life was intended to be a blessing to mankind; and that, notwithstanding the frailty and corruption of man, it has proved and continues to prove so. Among the circumstances which

* Gen. x. 5. † See Gen. v. ‡ Gen. ix. 29. § See Gen. xi.

contributed to swell the wickedness of the ancient world to its enormous magnitude, there were few probably more powerful than the apparent distance to which death was removed. In the present day, when he who has numbered seventy or eighty successive units, has numbered the years within which he and almost all his cotemporaries of the human race will be called to stand before the tribunal of their judge; to what an excess of iniquity do multitudes advance! What then would be the measure of their guilt, if they might with reasonable expectation look to many additional centuries of life? At present too, the reign of the oppressor, whether in a private or public station, is necessarily short. The hour that shall sweep him away is at hand. Were life restored to its antediluvian period, he might continue for nearly a thousand years to render his fellow creatures miserable. "I have seen the wicked," saith the Psalmist, "in great power, and spreading himself "like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and lo, "he was not: yea I sought him, but he could not be "found."* The common course of nature, speedily puts an end to his career; and his place may be filled by the righteous. To the righteous themselves, more especially if they are burthened with afflictions, the shortness of life is a gracious dispensation. They enter the sooner into the mansions of the "blessed which "die in the Lord: that they may rest from their la"bours, and their works do follow them."†

* Psalm xxxvii. 35, 36. † Rev. xiv. 13.

CHAPTER II.

SUMMARY VIEW OF THE ORIGIN OF THE JEWISH RACE, AND OF THE HISTORY OF THAT PEOPLE TO THE DEATH OF MOSES.

THE fallen nature of man, that inherent source of corrupt dispositions and corrupt practice, remained unaltered by the flood. There does not indeed appear to have been any circumstance in that dispensation, awful and stupendous as it was, which could reach the internal constitution of the soul. The truth of this conclusion is ascertained by the unequivocal declaration of God himself; who, when speaking immediately after the deluge concerning the future race of mankind which was to spring from the family that descended from the ark, and even when promising to that future race his continual protection and bounty, characterises them collectively in terms similar to those which he had applied to their wicked ancestors whom he had recently destroyed: "the imagination of man's heart "is evil from his youth."* The uniform tenor of the holy Scriptures, and universal testimony of experience, concur in evincing the undeminished power of the original depravity.

The sacred historian, hastening to record events so interesting to his own people and all mankind, as the vocation of Abraham and the divine promises confirmed to the succeeding Patriarchs, passes rapidly over the period intervening between the deluge and the call of the father of the Jewish race. The slight notices, however, which he gives of the conduct of men are such as seem to indicate the general prevalence of presumptuous guilt. Their attempt to build the tower of Babel was evidently in direct opposition to an humble dependence upon God. And the terms, in which the Supreme Being manifests his indignation on that occasion, strongly suggest the idea, that men were arrived at a very advanced stage of general and daring wickedness: "This

* Gen. viii. 21.

"they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained "from them, which they have imagined to do."* In the fulness therefore of wisdom and mercy, the Supreme Being, in order to preserve true religion alive among mankind, and to prepare the way for the coming of the promised Redeemer, had determined to select to himself from among the families of the earth a peculiar people; to place them in a country which should belong to them from generation to generation; to reveal to them a clear knowledge of his attributes and perfections; to deliver to them a system of laws and sacred rites adapted to answer the purposes both of rendering those who should receive them religious, and of shadowing out the future sufferings of Jesus Christ and the blessings thereby to be purchased; and to reward the obedience of this chosen race with temporal mercies so signal, and to chastise their disobedience by temporal calamities so severe, as might be suited to preserve this people faithful to their Divine Benefactor, to reclaim them when they should revolt from him, and to convince the inhabitants of surrounding countries that He was the only God.

Accordingly the Supreme Being, nearly two thousand years before the christian era, appeared to Abram, the son of Terah, an inhabitant of Ur in Mesopotamia, and said to him: "Get thee out of thy country, and "from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto "a land that I will shew thee. And I will make of thee "a great nation; and I will bless thee, and make thy "name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will "bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curs- "eth thee." To these glorious promises, which were to be the consequences of Abram's obedience, the Deity added another infinitely more glorious; that from him should descend the Redeemer of mankind: "and in "thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."† Abram, at the time when this divine communication was made to him, was very probably an idolater. The country of the Chaldees, which he inhabited, appears to have been distinguished from the earliest annals of

* Gen. xi. 6. † Gen. xii. 1.—3.

Pagan antiquity for magic and superstition. And Joshua* seems nearly to remove the possibility of doubt on the point under consideration by the following address to the Israelites, which proves the idolatry of Abram's family: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood." (the river Euphrates, so denominated from its extraordinary magnitude,) "in old time, even Terah the father of Abraham, "and the father of Nachor, and they served other gods." Abram however, convinced of the reality of the Divine command, and of the truth of the Divine promises, immediately prepared to depart. After the death of his father Terah, who accompanied him on his journey towards the promised country, but died by the way at Haran, Abram proceeded with his nephew Lot, and their families, into the land of Canaan; and on his arrival there, God appeared to him again; and said, "Unto thy seed will I give this land."† Abram had at this time no child: and the expectation of an offspring was for a very long period a continual and decisive trial of his faith. Some years after the time when the promise was originally given, it was twice renewed to him in terms which foretold an innumerable multitude of descendants: and "Abram believed in the Lord; "And he counted it to him for righteousness."‡ At length about eleven years after his arrival in Canaan he was rejoiced by the birth of his son Ishmael. Four years afterwards Abram was informed that the son indicated by Divine promise was yet to be born to him: and at the same time his own name was changed to Abraham, and that of his wife to Sarah; an alteration which, according to the Hebrew etymology, alluded to the incalculable number of their posterity. But it was not until about fourteen years after the birth of Ishmael, when the age of Abraham and Sarah precluded, according to the common course of nature, all prospect of a child being born to them, that they were blessed with Isaac, the long expected son, who was to inherit the promises made his father, particularly that of being the ancestor of the Messiah.

* Joshua xxiv. 2. † Gen. xii. 7. ‡ Gen. xii. 14, &c. and xv. 4—6.

The Almighty in the mean time imparted to Abraham several prophetic intimations of the future fortunes of his descendants. He had informed him that one branch of his posterity should dwell as strangers in a land that was not theirs, (namely in the land of Canaan, while it was as yet in other hands, and afterwards in Egypt,) during a period of four hundred years; but should then be brought forth in great triumph and prosperity from the scene of their distress.* And concerning Ishmael God declared that, though he should be a wild man, his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him; he should be the father of twelve princes and of a great nation, and should dwell in the presence of all his brethren.† In this case, as in the case already noticed of Canaan, and conformably to the general import of scriptural prophecies in similar instances; the prediction, delivered respecting the individual was designed to be descriptive of the characteristic events, which were to distinguish the fate of his posterity. Succeeding generations were witnesses, as we ourselves are in this our day, of the accurate fulfilment of this prophecy in the lot of the Arabians, the descendants of Ishmael. The twelve tribes of the Arabians are specified in Pagan history. Dwelling, like their progenitor, in the deserts; wild men, their hand against every man and every man's hand against them; engaged in perpetual hostility with each other and with every neighbouring power: they have steadily maintained their national independence. In vain have the most formidable armies of the greatest empires endeavoured to overturn it. They have retired baffled and dismayed; or have perished by the sword and famine in the wilderness. The Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Persians, the Macedonians, the Romans, the Turks, have successively confirmed by their fruitless efforts the veracity and omnipotence of God. After sustaining the most active enmity of the most powerful nations for three thousand

* Gen. xv. 13. 14. † Gen. xvi. 12.—xvii. 20.—and xxv. 16 See Bishop Newton's Dissertation on the Prophecies, vol. i. p. 37—63. 3d edition, 8vo.

seven hundred years, the Arabians still live, unsubdued and fearless, in the presence of all their brethren.

About the time of the birth of Isaac, the merciful acceptance given to the intercession of Abraham for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah afforded a memorable proof of the condescending goodness of the Supreme Being; and was graciously adapted to encourage the faithful servants of God to earnestness of supplication in behalf of themselves and others, by teaching the consoling truth which we learn also from the Apostle; that "the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."* The preservation of Lot from the general destruction evinced that the hand of Providence discriminates between the upright and the wicked.

In process of time it pleased God to "tempt" Abraham; that is to say, to try him, to put his obedience to a further test. The trial appointed was most severe. The father was commanded to take his son, his only son Isaac, (his only son by Sarah, and the child of the promise,) whom he loved, and to offer him as a burnt-sacrifice in the land of Moriah upon a mountain, which was to be pointed out to him. Abraham, strong in faith, immediately proceeded on the journey. He knew that whatever God commanded it was his duty to perform. He knew by long experience the power and the truth of the Almighty. He knew that the promise which he had received of an innumerable posterity, and one of them the Saviour of the world, by that very son Isaac who was now to be slain on the altar, would assuredly be accomplished. He confided that God, in return for this demonstration of unreserved obedience and entire dependance, would speedily restore his son to life †. The willing mind was sufficient in the sight of God. The fatal injunction, at the very moment when it was about to be executed, was countermanded by the voice of an angel. The full approbation of God was announced to Abraham; and every former promise made to him and to Isaac solemnly reiterated and confirmed. It is evident that the sacrifice of Isaac was a type of the future sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And the

* James v. 16. † Heb. xi. 17.—19.

mountain on which the transaction took place is by many conceived, and on no improbable grounds, to have been the identical mountain on which Christ suffered upon the cross.

Jacob, the younger son of Isaac, was afterwards pronounced by the Supreme Being to be the person in whose line the great promises made to his grandfather and father were to be continued. And his mother Rebecca, instead of implicitly depending on God for the fulfilment of his own word, had recourse to a very unwarrantable step in order to secure to him the patriarchal blessing accompanying the right to those promises; a blessing which she apprehended that the partiality of Isaac, now far advanced in years, would assign to his first-born Esau in contradiction to the purpose of heaven. Jacob, flying from the resentment of his brother Esau, who deemed himself defrauded of his right, a right, however, which while he had imagined it to be in his power he had profanely slighted;* received from God a full assurance of protection, and of the fulfilment of the original promise, in himself and his posterity.† And, after many years, when he returned into the land of Canaan with his wives and children and great possessions, the promise was again repeated: and as a signal mark of Divine favour, his name was changed to Israel; a term denoting a person who had power with God.‡ He returned in time to pay the last offices of duty to his father Isaac; and experienced the kindest reception from his reconciled brother Esau.

After dwelling somewhat more than thirty years, yet still as a stranger in the countries occupied by the Canaanites, Jacob removed with all his family into Egypt. For this event God had prepared the way by the sale of Joseph as a slave into that kingdom; by having bestowed on that young man, as a reward for his signal virtue, the power of interpreting the prophetic dreams of his fellow prisoners the servants of Pharaoh, and afterwards the visions of Pharaoh, himself; by having raised him to be the second person in the kingdom, pos-

* See Gen. xxv. 34, and Heb. xii. 16. † Gen. xxviii. 13—15.

‡ Gen. xxxv. 10, &c.

sessed in fact of the full exercise of sovereign authority, and by having thus enabled him to provide for his father and his repentant brethren an asylum during the continuance of the general famine. When Jacob was now commencing his journey, he was encouraged with this assurance from the Almighty; "I am God, the "God of thy father: Fear not to go down unto Egypt; "for I will there make of thee a great nation. I will go "down with thee unto Egypt; and I will also surely "bring thee" (thy posterity, at the end of the time predicted to Abraham*) "up again: and Joseph shall put "his hand upon thine eyes."† At the end of seventeen years Jacob died in Egypt; and was carried into the land of Canaan, according to the solemn charge which he had given to Joseph, and buried in the sepulchre of his fathers. Foretelling on his death-bed the appointed fortunes of his posterity, he bestowed on Judah a decided pre-eminence over his other sons: and intimated that he should be the immediate ancestor of the promised Messiah; and that until the Saviour should appear, the descendants of Judah should remain in possession of a national habitation and an established form of government.‡ Joseph in his turn confirmed to his brethren, at the time of his death, the certainty of their future departure to the promised land: and enjoined them to carry his bones thither with them.§

Other kings who had not known Joseph now arose successively in Egypt. Alarmed at the vast and still increasing number of the Israelites, they harrassed the unhappy strangers with the severest bondage; condemning them to be incessantly employed in the construction of cities and public works; and ultimately commanding that every man-child that should be born unto the Hebrews should be cast into the Nile. Moses, the chosen instrument for the deliverance of this people, was miraculously preserved from destruction, and educated in the court of Pharaoh. When arrived at the age of forty years, he slew an Egyptian who was smiting an Hebrew. He trusted that from this transaction the children of Israel, "his brethern, would have

* Gen. xv. 13. 14. † Gen. xlvi. 3, 4. ‡ Gen. xlix. 8.—10. § Gen. l. 25.

"understood that God by his hand would deliver them. "But they understood not."* Compelled therefore to save his life by flight from the resentment of Pharaoh, he retired into the land of Midian. There, after about forty additional years, while feeding the flocks of his father-in-law on Mount Horeb, in the wilderness inclosed between the two northern points of the Red Sea, his attention was attracted by the appearance of a conflagration raging in a thicket, by which however the thicket was not consumed. God, who thus manifested himself to Moses, commanded him to return into Egypt; that in conjunction with his brother Aaron he might bring forth the children of Israel from captivity, and conduct them into the land of Canaan to possess it. After some degree of improper hesitation arising from timidity, Moses obeyed; and thenceforth executed with undaunted resolution, resulting from steady confidence in the promised assistance of the Almighty, the commission with which he was charged. His countrymen, convinced by the miracles which God enabled him to work, received him as their leader and deliverer. Tamed by ten successive judgments closed by the death of all the first-born in Egypt, the hardened heart of Pharaoh sunk within him. The children of Israel, loaded by the Egyptians, who trembled at their presence, with the most valuable gifts, designed to procure their forgiveness for the cruel oppression which they had sustained, departed in triumph from the land of bondage. But Pharaoh speedily relapsed into obduracy. Enraged at the loss of six hundred thousand slaves, for to so great a multitude were the men of Israel, exclusive of women and children, encreased, the king of Egypt followed them at the head of his armies; and continued the pursuit into the midst of the Red Sea, which God had divided, that it might afford a passage on dry ground for his people. The waves at the Divine word returned to their place; and not a single Egyptian survived.

The departure of the children of Israel from Egypt, after a residence there of two hundred and fifteen years,

* Acts vii. 23—25.

took place about fifteen hundred and fifty one years before the Christian Era. It was signalised by the institution of the passover; a religious rite appointed to commemorate the mercy of God in charging the destroying angel to pass over the houses of the Israelites, when he smote all the first-born of the Egyptians; and ordered to be annually observed from generation to generation until the coming of Jesus Christ to put an end to the Mosaic dispensation, and to make that effectual atonement for sin, of which the Paschal offering was an emblem.*

The shortest road from Egypt to the land of Canaan lay along the coast of the Mediterranean through the country of the Philistines. The Israelites, however, with minds depressed by slavery and unaccustomed to repose full confidence on their God, would have preferred a return into their former bondage to a contest with warlike nations hostile to their passage. For this reason therefore, among others,† the Supreme Being had conducted them circuitously by the way of the Red Sea. He now directed their course through the wilderness towards Mount Sinai, one part of the chain of Mount Horeb; the place concerning which he had said on his first appearance to Moses, "when thou hast "brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve "God upon this mountain."‡ On their way thither, by their successive murmurings, at Marah, in the wilderness of Sin, and at Rephidim, notwithstanding the reiterated miracles by which they were protected and sustained; they gave early proofs of meriting the denomination so frequently applied to them in the Scriptures, that of a "stiff-necked" people; a people stubborn in unbelief, and obstinately rebellious. One of these miracles was nothing less than the daily supply of a substance, termed Manna, in quantities sufficient for the sustenance of the whole multitude; and ultimately continued to them without interruption during forty years. In the third month after their departure from Egypt they encamped before Mount Sinai.

* 1 Cor. v. 7. † Exod. xiii. 17, 18. ‡ Exod. iii. 12.

It was here that the Almighty, graciously accommodating his conduct to the apprehensions and usages of men, proposed the establishment of a solemn covenant between himself and the people of Israel. "Moses went up unto God; and the Lord called unto him "out of the mountain, saying—Thus shalt thou say "to the House of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: "Ye have seen what I did to the Egyptians; and how "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto "myself. Now then, if ye will obey my voice indeed, "and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar "treasure unto me above all people: for all the "earth is mine: and ye shall be a kingdom of priests "unto me, and an holy nation. These are the "words which thou shalt speak unto the children "of Israel. And Moses came and called for the "elders of the people, and laid before their faces all "these words, which the Lord commanded him. "And all the people answered together, and said: All "that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses "returned the words of the people unto the Lord."* In consequence of this unequivoeal acceptance and ratification of the covenant proposed, the Supreme Being proceeded to deliver to the Israelites those laws and institutions, the faithful observance of which was the condition on their part that should entitle them to the privileges and blessings reciprocally promised by their God. That the obedience already due for unnumbered mercies might be confirmed by a display of the terrors of his majesty, he revealed his glory in the most awful manner on mount Sinai. "There were thun-"ders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the "Mount; and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; "so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. "And Mount Sinai was altogether in a smoke, because "the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke "thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace; and the "whole Mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of "the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake; and God answered him by a voice."†

* Exod. xix. 3—8. † Exod. xix. 16.—19.

When the voice of God had proclaimed the ten commandments, the people, unable to support the tremenduous manifestations of the Divine Presence, earnestly entreated* that they might no more hear the voice of God; but that his will might be communicated to Moses, and by Moses be declared to them. The Supreme Being listened to their request. The people retired afar off. "Moses drew near unto the thick darkness, "where God was;" and received many additional laws and regulations, which he recited to the Israelites and then recorded in a book: and the people solemnly renewed their promise of punctual obedience.† Moses, then, according to the Divine command, re-ascended the mountain, leaving the Israelites under the conduct of Aaron and Hur, and continued there forty days: during which period he was instructed in the ritual of the tabernacle, and the appointment of the family of Aaron to the priesthood; and received two tables of stone containing the ten commandments, written by the finger of God. In the mean time, the people, weary of his absence, and presumptuously regardless of their covenanted obedience to the Almighty, who had expressly prohibited them from worshipping or making any image as an emblem of himself, induced Aaron, who most criminally permitted himself to be overborne by their importunities, to form a golden calf; a form probably adopted in consequence of their having been accustomed to see it adored in Egypt; that it might be carried at the head of the host as a visible representation of Jehovah. On the earnest intercession of Moses, God forebore to destroy the people. Their guilt, however, was punished by the loss of the two tables, broken by Moses in his indignation on first being informed of the idolatry established in the camp; by the still more grievous loss of the immediate presence of God, who ordered his tabernacle to be removed out of the encampment, and declared that an angel instead of himself should now be their conductor; by the menace of future visitations on account of this transgression; and by the actual penal inflictions im-

* Exod. xx. 19. See also Deut. v. 22, &c. † Exod. xxiv. 3, 7.

plied in the words of Scripture, "The Lord *plagued* "the people, because they made the calf."* Two fresh tables of stone, in the place of those which had been broken, were then prepared by Moses, and taken up unto the Mount, according to the commandment of God, who wrote upon them the words which had been inscribed on the former; and afterwards delivered to Moses, during this his second continuance there of forty days, additional ordinances and directions to be obeyed by the twelve tribes. The remainder of the Jewish code was from time to time imparted to Moses, chiefly from the tabernacle, and by him made known to the people: and the tribe of Levi was set apart for the service of the sanctuary.

In the second month of the second year of their departure from Egypt, the Israelites were commanded to resume their march towards the promised land; and in the fourth month of the same year they arrived on its confines. Even the few intervening weeks did not pass without exhibiting two scenes of rebellious murmuring against God,* together with a sedition, in which Aaron himself was a party directed against Moses. These outrages were but the preludes to more flagrant acts of incredulity and disobedience. Twelve leading men, selected one from a tribe, were dispatched by Moses, conformably to the desire of the people, to examine into the state and productions of the land of Canaan. All of them, on their return from exploring the land during forty days, concurred in extolling its fertility. But ten of them gave so formidable an account of the personal strength and military power of the inhabitants, that, notwithstanding the utmost efforts of their associates Caleb and Joshua, who strenuously exhorted the Israelites to go up instantly, trusting in the might and the promise of the Lord of Hosts, the people absolutely refused to venture into the country. They even prepared to stone to death Caleb and Joshua, and, as it seems, Moses and Aaron also. At the fervent supplication

* Exod. xxxii, 34, 35. † At Taberah, and at Kibroth-hattaavah, Numb xi.

of Moses, the destruction with which the Almighty threatened instantly to overwhelm his rebellious people was delayed. But God solemnly declared, that not one of the whole congregation who had arrived at the age of twenty years, his faithful servants Caleb and Joshua excepted, should ever set their foot on the promised land. All the rest were gradually to perish during the forty years to be numbered from the time of their leaving Egypt, which he now doomed them to pass in wanderings in the desert. The sacred historian, though he gives a catalogue of the subsequent journies and places of encampment of the Israelites during this period; has recorded little concerning the further transactions, which took place antecedently to the concluding year. In the brief account, however, which he has delivered, we meet with one of the customary rebellions of the people, commenced by Korah, Dathan and Abiram who with their families were swallowed up by the earth, which opened beneath them; and drawing after it the destruction of near fifteen thousand of the congregation by fire from heaven, or by a pestilence.* In the beginning of the fortieth year, when they were encamped near Kadesh on the confines of Edom, they again rebelled for want of water; and by their violence ensnared Moses and Aaron into a degree of presumption and distrust, which drew from the Almighty this awful sentence: "Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me "in the eyes of the children of Israel; therefore ye shall "not bring this congregation into the land which I have "given them."† About four months afterwards Aaron was accordingly commanded to ascend mount Hor, with his son Eleazar and Moses, in the sight of the congregation; where Moses took off the priestly garments from Aaron, and put them on his son: and Aaron died before God on the top of the mountain.‡ At the close of the fortieth year, yet not until they had again broken forth into rebellion, and had been punished by fiery serpents;§ they encamped, after completely subduing

* Numb. xvi. † Numb. xx. 12 ‡ Numb. xx. 23. &c. xxxiii. 38.
§ Numb. xxi. 4—9. From the bite of these serpents they were not to be cured except by looking on a brazen serpent, which God commanded Moses

the Amorites who opposed their march, in the plains of Moab, near the river Jordan, opposite to Jericho. The terror of their name, and the multitude of their host, filled Balak the, king of Moab, with consternation. He instantly dispatched messengers to Balaam, a celebrated prophet of Pethor in Mesopotamia, inviting him to come and pronounce solemn maledictions against the Israelites, as an infallible method of ensuring their defeat. Balaam, obeying the directions which he received from God, refused to return with them. A more numerous and more honorable set of ambassadors arrived from the king of Moab. Balaam, "who loved "the wages of unrighteousness,"* inflamed with the desire of possessing the riches and honours promised on his compliance with the royal request, again laid the matter before God; although he had before received an answer which precluded all further application: "Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse "the people; for they are blessed."† The supreme Being to whom the covetousness of Balaam's heart was manifest, gave him permission to accompany the princes of Moab, on condition of his speaking concerning Israel that only which God should put into his mouth, yet shewed him on the journey by several miraculous intimations that his avaricious desire to undertake it was highly offensive in the eyes of his Maker. Three successive times did Balaam disappoint Balak by pronouncing blessings instead of curses on the children of Israel. But the corrupt mind of the soothsayer devised another method of gratifying his employer. He instructed Balak to endeavour to ensnare the Israelites into idolatry and its attendant vices; and thus to withdraw them from the Divine protection.‡ The scheme was attended with considerable success. Israel worshipped the gods of Moab: the anger of the Lord was kindled; and twenty-four thousand of the congregation were immediately destroyed by a pesti-

to make, and to raise on a pole in the camp. Our Saviour alludes to this transaction, John, iii. 14. as emblematical of that faith in him, by which alone mankind can be delivered from the deadly consequences of guilt.

* 2 Peter ii. 15. † Numb. xxii. 12. ‡ Numb. xxxii. 16.

lence. The zeal of Phinehas for the honour of Jehovah was rewarded with the promise of a perpetual priesthood to him and his posterity. The Israelites were commanded to make war on the nation, which had seduced them into transgression. The Midianites were utterly destroyed by the sword of Israel: and Balaam perished with them.

But why it may be said, did the all-knowing Searcher of hearts vouchsafe to hold converse with so worthless a character? Whence comes it that inspiration, and prophetic knowledge, and other especial favours of heaven, bestowed on so few individuals of the whole human race, are not uniformly conferred upon the righteous? On the righteous they have been bestowed almost exclusively: yet to this rule there have unquestionably been exceptions. Balaam was an exception: Judas Iscariot was an exception: and perhaps one or two more may be discovered in the Scriptures. We may be satisfied, that He who can bestow on his creatures the gifts of inspiration and prophecy, and miraculous powers, will not in any instance distribute them without sufficient reasons whether his reasons be perceptible to us or not. Can we then discover no one advantage likely to result from the occasional selection of an unworthy object for the reception of these peculiar favours? One benefit seems obviously to present itself to our consideration. We learn the momentous lesson, that it is neither inspiration nor prophetic knowledge, nor the power of working miracles, which can lead to salvation; but a life exercised in the fear and the love of God. It is to be observed, that the divine justice has usually displayed itself in the signal punishment, in this world of the guilty wretch, whom not even the possession of the peculiar favours of God had subdued unto holiness. Balaam died by the hand of those whom he had beguiled into idolatry: Judas Iscariot by his own.

During the two concluding months of the fortieth year, Moses, knowing that his death was at hand, delivered to the then existing generation of the Israelites, most of whom either were not born when the law was

originally given, or were too young to enter fully into its meaning, a recapitulation* of the Divine commands, with such slight additions or variations as he had been instructed to make. That he might inspire them with the deepest conviction of their own unworthiness, and of the long-suffering and kindness of their heavenly Benefactor; he recalled to their remembrance all the wonderful works which God had wrought in their behalf, and their own frequent acts of obstinate incredulity and rebellion. And to persuade them by every motive to continue stedfast for the future in obedient service to that power, who, notwithstanding so many provocations, was about to give them possession of the land of Canaan; he laid before them in detail a most encouraging catalogue of the blessings which would accompany them as long as they should remain faithful to Jehovah; and prophetically denounced, in terms equally circumstantial, the miseries with which Divine justice would pursue the disobedience of themselves and their posterity. Having performed this concluding office of duty and affection to his countrymen; and having appointed, as the Lord directed him, Joshua to be their leader in his place; having committed the Book of the Law, which he had written, to the care of the Levites, that it might be preserved by the side of the Ark; he ascended to the top of Mount Nebo: and having from that station surveyed the promised land, which he was not to enter, died before the Lord. His body was buried by the Lord in a valley in the country of the Moabites, in a spot not disclosed to the children of Israel; lest, as it should seem, their reverence for the memory of their departed lawgiver, concurring with their inherent proneness to idolatry, should afterwards lead them to pay religious honours to his remains.

Such was, as to this world and its labours, the end of Moses, the servant of God. In every instance, except in that which was punished, for an awful proof of of the impartial dealings of the Supreme Being with

* That recapitulation, and the other subjects mentioned in this paragraph, form the contents of the book of Deuteronomy.

men, by his being forbidden to enter the land of promise; he appears to have discharged with unabated zeal the commission with which he was intrusted. The law which through his instrumentality was communicated to the Israelites, consisted partly of instructions and precepts in themselves of a moral and religious nature; partly of ceremonial ordinances, and directions, respecting points originally indifferent. The former branch contained a clear revelation of the eternity, the power, the wisdom, the goodness, and the other infinite perfections, of the only God, the Maker, the Preserver, the Governor, and the Judge of the universe. In the ten commandments, the sum of moral duty may truly be said to be comprehended; since the prohibition of the chief crime in each class of offences evidently includes, by parity of reasoning, the prohibition of all inferior crimes of that class, as partaking of the sinful nature, and tending ultimately to produce the guilt, of the greatest. The subordinate duties thus implied in the commandments were afterwards in a great variety of cases detailed and exemplified at large in other parts of the books of Moses. This branch of the law is manifestly of universal and perpetual obligation; and is repeatedly mentioned as such by our Saviour. The other branch was designed to be obligatory on the Jews only; and on them no longer than until the coming of the Messiah, whose sufferings and atonement many of its rites and ceromonies prefigured. If in this part of the law we should meet with some directions, the object and utility of which should not at first sight be apparent to us; let us beware of setting up the conclusions of our ignorance against the unbounded wisdom of the Deity. A closer consideration of the subject will teach us humbly to acknowledge, that all these institutions answered the purposes of exercising the Israelites in faith and obedience; of preserving them a distinct and separate people; and of training them by a peculiar mode of discipline,* wisely according with their habits, prepossessions and circumstances, for the reception of the new dispensation to be revealed

* Gal. iii. 23—25.

under the Messiah. It will teach us also that many of those directions, which rashness and presumption are sometimes heard to censure as trifling, and unworthy of the Divine attention, were specifically calculated to guard the people of Israel from being betrayed into certain particular modes of idolatry and wickedness prevalent in the nations among whom they were to dwell.

CHAPTER III.

SUMMARY VIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS FROM THE DEATH OF MOSES TO THE PRESENT TIME.

JOSHUA, having received from the Almighty a promise of unfailing support,* and a grant, in behalf of the Israelites, of the whole region extending from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean, and from the mountains of Lebanon on the north to the Wilderness of Sin on the south;† prepared to put the twelve tribes into possession of their inheritance. The hand of God was stretched out to aid him. The waters of the river Jordan, at that time overflowing, like the Nile, with its annual inundation, were miraculously parted asunder to afford a passage on dry ground to the host. The walls of Jericho fell to the earth. The sun and the moon stood still to afford Israel time for the complete overthrow of his enemies. The extirpation of the Canaanites was gradual; that the beasts of the field might not have time to multiply and overspread the land.‡ But before the death of Joshua, the country, though a considerable portion remained to be subdued, was divided by lot, according to the command of God, among the tribes; with the exception of that

* Joshua i. 5. † Josh. i. 4. See also Numb. xxxiv. 3.—Deut. xi. 24.—and Gen. xv. 18. ‡ Deut. vii. 22.

of Levi, and of those which had already received at their own request their inheritance in the conquered kingdoms of the Amorites, on the other side of the Jordan. The Levites were provided with cities for the residence of their families; and with an ample subsistence from the sacrifices and tithes of other tribes, on whose behalf, as well as on their own, they were to minister at the altar.

The command, which God had given to Israel respecting the Canaanites, was, that they should be exterminated." "Of the cities of these people, "which the "Lord thy God doth give thee for thine inheritance, "thou shalt save nothing alive that breatheth." The reason of this injunction is immediately subjoined: "thou shalt utterly destroy them, as the Lord thy God "hath commanded thee; that they teach you not to do "after all their abominations."* Persons, who seem to have conceived that to cavil at the Bible is a mark of discernment, have eagerly seized upon this passage; and have represented it as containing a sanguinary edict unworthy of a merciful Governor of the universe; and as affording in fact a conclusive proof that the Bible is not the Word of God. Our faith however in the truth of Scripture is founded on too many irrefragable arguments to be staggered by such an objection as this, even if an answer in every point satisfactory could not be returned it. In every work of God around us there is much that we cannot perfectly understand. Why then should we be surprised, if he should permit that, for the exercise of our understandings and the trial of our faith, some difficulties should exist in his word also? But the difficulty in question is of no formidable nature. The command is fully justified even to human apprehension by the reason which God himself assigned for it. We know that the Canaanites, in their gross and bloody idol-worship, a worship celebrated with the sacrifice of their own children, and in the universal and unbridled profligacy of their manners, had abandoned themselves to such shameless and detestable wickedness, that in the emphatical language of holy writ, the land itself abhor-

* Deut. xx. 16.

red and vomited out her inhabitants.* We know the obstinate propensity of the Israelites to forsake their supreme Benefactor; and to pollute themselves with idolatry and all its attendant abominations. We know, too, that when they disobeyed the injunction to extirpate all the nations which dwelt in Canaan, and contented themselves with subjecting some of them to tribute; those Canaanites, who were thus permitted to remain, proved thorns and snares to the people of Israel; grievous as enemies, corrupting as friends, and ultimately the cause of their ruin, according to the previous warnings delivered from God himself by the mouth of Moses and of Joshua.† The destruction of the Canaanites therefore was fully deserved by their crimes; and was requisite to preserve Israel from being ensnared by them or by their posterity into the same crimes. The latter circumstance explains the reason why even the young children of the people of Canaan were included in the sentence of extirpation: and "justifies the ways "of God to man" in an instance which has been alledged as contrary to all ideas of the Divine rectitude by objectors, who seem to have forgotten that in earthquakes also, and in famines, and in pestilences, the Deity sees fit to let unoffending infancy be involved in the common desolation ;‡ and that a future life affords ample scope for the complete discrimination between innocence and guilt. The employment of the Israelites as ministers to execute the Divine vengeance was calculated to impress them with a deep conviction of the enormity of the sins of their predecessors in the land: and with an awful recollection that the same punishment was already denounced against themselves, if they should fall into similar transgressions.

Joshua, now far advanced in years, assembled the twelve tribes of Israel to hear his last instructions. He recounted the wonders which God had wrought for them in Egypt, in the Wilderness, and in the land of Canaan, notwithstanding their many provocations; pointed out the punctual accomplishment of every one

* Lev. xviii. 24, 25, &c. Deut. xii. 31.

† Numb. xxxiii. 55, 56. Josh. xxiii. 13. Judg. ii. 3.

‡ See Bishop Watson's Apology for the Bible, 3d edition, p. 14, &c.

of the Divine promises: and having declared beforehand the stedfast determination of himself and his family to remain faithful servants of the Lord, received from the whole congregation a similar assurance repeated in the most solemn terms. He then dismissed the people, every man to his inheritance, and shortly afterwards died.

During the life-time of the elders, who had been contemporaries with Joshua, the Israelites continued true to their engagement. The following generation gave themselves up to idolatry. For the space of about three hundred years from the death of Joshua, their history exhibits a constant succession of idolatrous revolts from God, punished by captivity under the hand of the neighbouring nations; and of deliverances mercifully vouchsafed to them, when distress and anguish drove them to repentance. During this period they were governed, when free from a foreign yoke, by magistrates denominated judges; who were in general the persons by whose hand the Supreme Being had rescued them from the power of their oppressors. The judge was not regarded as the head of the nation, occupying a station similar to that filled by kings or other chief magistrates in modern times. That station was considered as filled by God himself. Thus when "the men of Israel said "unto Gideon," (their judge,) "Rule thou over us; "both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also; for "thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian: Gi"deon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither "shall my son rule over you. The Lord shall rule over you."* At length, in the latter days of Samuel, who had long been their judge; and somewhat less than eleven hundred years before the Christian era; the people clamorously insisted on having, like other nations, a king to govern them. The Supreme Being testified his displeasure at this act of rebellious ingratitude: "They have rejected me, that I should not reign over "them:"† but he commanded Samuel to annoint a king over them, conformably to their desire. Samuel accordingly assembled the tribes. And having set be-

* Judg. viii. 22, 23. † 1 Sam. viii. 7.

fore them their baseness in renouncing the immediate sovereignty of God; and having forewarned them, according to the directions which he had previously received from the Almighty, of the chastisement which they must expect from Divine justice through the instrumentality of kings resembling their subjects in wickedness;* he yielded to the determination in which they still resolutely persisted. Saul, the Son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, was selected by the designation of Heaven to be king of Israel: and the continuance of the Divine protection and favour was promised to the sovereign and the people, on the condition of their fidelity to the worship and the laws of God.

The obedience of Saul was exercised by two specific trials. In both of them he failed: breaking the positive commandment of God, in the first, through impatience and distrust;† in the second, through fear of giving offence to the people.‡ Samuel was in consequence obliged to inform Saul, that the sceptre should not continue in his family, and to anoint David, the son of Jesse, of the tribe of Judah, to be the successor to the throne. David, signalised soon afterwards by his miraculous victory over Goliah: and held in the highest estimation by the people on account of the wisdom of his conduct; preserved his life with difficulty during many years from the persecuting jealousy of Saul. On the death of that monarch, after a reign of forty years, in battle against the Philistines, he went up to Hebron, as God directed him; and was there crowned king of the tribe of Judah. And after seven years of war with the house of Saul, he ascended the throne of all Israel.

One of the earliest actions of his reign over the twelve tribes was to acquire complete possession of the city of Jerusalem, by forcibly dislodging the Jebusites, the old inhabitants of the land, from the fortress of Zion, which they had hitherto retained. This city he enlarged and beautified, and made it his capital; and finally brought thither the Ark of God. For its recep-

* 1 Sam. viii. 10—19. x. 19. xii. 12. † 1 Sam. xiii. 8.—13.
‡ 1 Sam. xv. 1—24.

tion he proposed to build a sumptuous temple. The Supreme Being graciously accepted the piety of the intention; but forbade the king to execute the undertaking, in consequence of his having necessarily shed much blood in the wars in which he had been engaged.* This prohibition however was accompanied with many glorious promises to David and his family; and with an assurance that one of the sons of David who should inherit the throne, and be "a man of rest," should erect the temple. For the magnificence of this future structure David made the most ample preparations: and previously to his death solemnly charged his son and successor, Solomon, to devote himself to the work; and to complete it, under the Divine protection, in a manner worthy of the sacred purpose for which it was designed.

The character and conduct of David, with the exception of certain well-known instances of most flagrant criminality, which were followed by public and exemplary punishment from God, and by the deepest anguish and repentance on the part of the offender, were distinguished by holiness and virtue. He was free, and preserved his people free, from the slightest taint of idolatry. His confidence in his Maker was unshaken. To his enemies he was placable, to his friends singularly affectionate. His Psalms, whether they describe the glory and majesty of God; pour forth supplications for his favour; return the effusions of gratitude for mercies received; breathe sorrow and humiliation for sins, general and particular; or prophetically describe the future sufferings of the Messiah, ordained to descend from the family of David: are models of ardent devotion, and will continue to the end of the world to exalt the piety and gladden the bosoms of those, who labour to imitate the righteousness of David "the man after "God's own heart."† This phrase, the meaning of which has sometimes been profanely misrepresented, as though the Supreme Being regarded with indifference the heinous transgressions into which David was occasionally betrayed; refers to the earnest and prevailing desire of David faithfully to serve God, and his

* 2 Chron. xxii. 8. † Acts xiii. 22.

unfeigned contrition when he was ensnared into guilt. It seems also to allude particularly to his utter abhorrence of idolatry *

Solomon, surrounded with peace and prosperity, and endued from above with that wisdom which he had justly preferred to every worldly possession, immediately on his accession began to erect the Temple; and finished it in less than eight years. Afterwards it was dedicated to God with the utmost solemnity by the king and the assembled people of Israel. The lord testified his acceptance of the building thus consecrated to him by filling it with his glory: "the cloud filled the House "of the Lord so that the priests could not stand to mi- "nister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord "had filled the House of the Lord."† And afterwards God appeared unto Solomon, and declared that if the kings and people of Israel would continue faithful in their obedience, his eyes and his heart should be on that temple perpetually; but that otherwise it should be utterly destroyed. From that time the altar in the Temple became, conformably to the Divine command given unto Moses,‡ the established and only lawful place for offering burnt sacrifices unto God.

Notwithstanding the signal marks of Divine favour which he had enjoyed, Solomon in his declining years was seduced by his foreign wives into idolatry. And although there is great reason to believe that he afterwards repented; and in the season of his grief and re-

* So God, by the mouth of the prophet Ahijah, said to Jeroboam, "thou "hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and "who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right i "mine eyes. But thou hast done evil above all that were before thee: *for* "*thou hast gone and made thee other gods and molten images, to provoke me to* "*anger, and hast cast me behind thy back.*" 1 Kings, xiv. 8, 9. And of Solomon it is said that when he was old "his wives *turned away his heart after* "*other gods; and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was* "*the heart of David his father.*" 1 Kings, xi. 4. The phrase, a heart "perfect" or "not perfect," and other equivalent expressions, are frequently used in the Scriptures to characterise the conduct of subsequent kings of Israel respecting idolatry. See 1 Kings, xv. 3. 11. 14. 2 Kings, x. 31. 2 Chron. xxii. 9.—xxv. 2. 14, &c.—xxxi. 1. 3.

† 1 Kings, viii. 10. 11. ‡ Deut. xii. 11.

morse composed the book of Ecclesiastes, in which he feelingly proclaims the vanity of every thing except holiness; he was punished with the information that the sovereignty over ten of the tribes of Israel should be taken from his family, and given to Jeroboam, one of his officers. Immediately after the death of Solomon, the rash and intemperate answer of his son Rehoboam to the Israelites, who requested to be delivered from the burdens imposed upon them by the deceased monarch, was the incident employed by the hand of Providence to effect the predicted revolution. The ten tribes revolted from the House of David: and Jeroboam became their king, and Samaria their capital. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained under the government of Rehoboam. From that time the two kingdoms, discriminated by the appellations of Israel and Judah, continued distinct. This separation took place about nine hundred and seventy-five years before Christ.

The men of Israel were bound, pursuant to the Mosaic law, to present themselves three times in a year in solemn assembly before the Lord * at Jerusalem. But Jeroboam, fearing lest they should thus be led to return to the dominion of their former master, would not trust his power in the hands of God who had bestowed it. He "took counsel" with the irreligious politicians of his court; and received such advice as men of that description commonly give. Professing that the distance of Jerusalem rendered the attendance of his subjects there inconvenient to them, he erected two golden calves, one at Dan the other at Bethel, two places at the opposite extremities of his dominions; and commanded his people to resort thither to offer sacrifices and to worship. Unawed by the Divine judgments denounced against him, and by those which he miraculously experienced † he resolutely persevered in the establishment of idolatry. Hence he is distinguished in subsequent parts of Holy Writ by the awful appellation of "Jeroboam, who did sin, and made Israel to sin:"‡ the man who deliberately renounced his allegiance to

* Deut. xvi. 16. † 1 Kings, xiii. 1. to the end.
‡ 1 Kings, xiv, 16.—xv. 30, &c. &c.

his God, and established the worship of idols among his own subjects through many generations.

During eighteen successive reigns the throne of Jeroboam passing, chiefly by conspiracies and usurpations, into eight new families, was occupied by princes like himself; princes differing from each other in degrees of depravity, but alike resolute in adhering to the idolatrous worship of the golden calves. In vain did the Lord send prophet after prophet, and among them Elijah and Elisha, armed with the power of working stupendous miracles, and commissioned to call the nations to repentance, and to predict the vengeance ready to fall on them, if they should continue in their sins. In vain were the territories of Israel cut short and laid waste by potent enemies raised up from time to time as ministers of the Divine vengeance. At length in the ninth year of the reign of Hoshea, about thirty years after the foundation of Rome by Romulus, and about seven hundred and twenty-one years before Christ, the Supreme Being poured forth the fulness of his indignation on a people, whom neither chastisements nor mercies could reclaim. Shalmaneser, the king of Assyria, took the capital city Samaria, after a siege of three years; and became completely master of the whole kingdom. It was in those days a maxim of policy among eastern conquerors to remove vanquished nations to settlements far distant from their native country: that all hopes of returning thither being precluded, and all local incitements calculated to stimulate the desire of independence and render slavery less tolerable being removed, the wretched captives might remain less prone to insurrection and revolt. The depopulated territories were usually replenished with colonies of inhabitants transplanted from a remote part of the dominions of the victor. Conformably to this practice Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, having conquered, about twenty years before, the countries of the Gadites, the Reubenites, and the Manassites eastward of the Jordan, together with Galilee occupied by the tribe of Nephthali, had carried away the inhabitants into Assyria; and had placed them "in Halah, and in Habor

" by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes." To the same cities Shalmaneser now carried the remainder of the ten tribes: and brought men from Ba-" bylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Ha-" math, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and " they possessed Samaria and dwelt in the cities there-" of."* Of the subsequent fate of the ten tribes, thus carried into captivity, little is known unto the present hour. Many individuals of each tribe appear to have returned about two hundred years afterwards in company with the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. But the great mass of the ten tribes has continued in obscurity to this day: yet in that obscurity preserved, as we believe from the sure word of prophecy, against that appointed period, when all Israel shall be re-united, and restored to their own land.

Let us now return to the kingdom of Judah. There the sceptre invariably remained, according to the promise of God, in the hands of the family of David. The successors of Rehoboam, who, like the kings of Israel after Jeroboam during a much shorter period, were eighteen in number, were of extremely various characters. Some of them, as Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah, were bright examples of piety. Others, among whom Jehoram, Ahaziah, and Manasseh are conspicuous, notwithstanding the denunciations of prophets and the judicial infliction of national calamities, abandoned themselves to idolatry. Manasseh in particular not only " built up again the high places, which Hezekiah, " his father, had destroyed; and reared up altars for " Baal, and worshipped all the host of heaven and serv-" ed them;" but, as it were in defiance of the true God, " built altars in the House of the Lord, of which " the Lord had said, In Jerusalem will I put my name: " and he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two " courts of the House of the Lord—and he set a graven " image of the grove, that he had made, in the House."† His conduct during this period was throughout consis-

* 1 Chron. v. 26. 1 Kings xv. 20. 2 Kings xvii. 6. 24.

† 2 Kings, xxi. 3. 7.

tent in wickedness. "He made his son to pass thro' "the fire, and observed times, and used inchantments, "and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards—" and seduced his "subjects to do more evil than did the nations "whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Is- "rael—and shed innocent blood very much, till he had "filled Jerusalem from one end to another."* The Supreme Being, therefore, declared that the crimes of Judah should be punished by a fate similar to that which had overtaken the guilt of Israel. "I will stretch over "Jerusalem the line of Samaria—and I will wipe Jeru- "salem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping and turning it "upside down:"† a comparison describing in the most expressive terms the utter subversion of the city, and the complete removal of its inhabitants. Captivity and anguish opened the eyes of Manasseh; and led him to bitter and durable repentance.‡ But his successors imitated him only in transgression. The kings of Babylon, foretold from the reign of Hezekiah as instruments ordained to execute the wrath of Heaven against Judah,§ and already employed for the chastisement of Manasseh, appeared anew before Jerusalem; unconscious that, while they were bent solely on ambitious views of aggrandizing their empire, they were sent forth by Providence to fulfil its predetermined purpose. About six hundred and six years before the Christian era Jerusalem was delivered into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, who sent to Babylon a part of the vessels and treasures of the Temple of the Lord, together with many persons of the royal blood and of the principal families; and bound Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, in fetters, that he might also be carried thither:‖ but at length permitted him to remain a tributary vassal in Judea. Eight years afterwards the son and successor of Jehoiakim, together with ten thousand of his subjects, was carried captive into Chaldea.¶ And finally in the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah, about five hundred and eighty-eight years before Christ, and one hundred and thirty-three years after the commencement of

* 2 Kings xxi. 6. 9. 16. † 2 Kings, xxi. 13. ‡ 2 Chron. xxx. 11. 18.
§ 2 Kings, xx. 17. ‖ 2 Chron. xxxvi. 6. Dan. i. 1—5. ¶ 2 Kings xxiv. 10. &c.

the captivity of the ten tribes, Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar at the end of a siege of eighteen months; and, together with the Temple of God, was burned to the ground and utterly destroyed. Zedekiah was brought to Riblah into the presence of Nebuchadnezzar, who, after having commanded his eyes to be put out, sent him in fetters to Babylon: thus fulfilling unawares two seemingly discordant predictions of Jeremiah and Ezekiel; the former of which prophets had declared concerning Zedekiah that as a captive he should see the king of Babylon face to face, and be carried to that city;* the latter, that his eyes should never behold it.† The principal part of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin was also led captive into Chaldea.‡ Over the people of the poorer class which were left in the land, and were joined by fugitives from contiguous districts, Gedaliah was appointed governor. He being shortly afterwards killed by a conspiracy; the remnant of the Jews, dreading the vengeance of the Chaldeans, resolved to fly into Egypt. This measure Jeremiah was directed by the Almighty to forbid; and was commissioned also to inform the Jews, that if they persisted in their design, they should be overtaken in the country where they sought for refuge by their dreaded enemy Nebuchadnezzar; who, in the sublime language of Scripture, should "array himself with the land of Egypt "as a shepherd putteth on a garment."§ But the people would not be restrained. Carrying Jeremiah with them, they hasted into Egypt; which country, according to the Divine declaration was subdued about sixteen years afterwards by the king of Babylon. Thus was Judea emptied of its inhabitants. So extreme was the predicted desolation to be, that, four years after the burning of Jerusalem, while Nebuchadnezzar was employed in the siege of Tyre; Nebuzaradan, the captain of his guard, swept away to Babylon the scanty reliques of the people, who had collected together in their native land, amounting to seven hundred and forty-five persons.‖

* Jerem. xxxii. 4. and xxxiv. 3. † Ezek. xii. 13. ‡ 2 Chron. xxxvi. 0. § Jerem. xlii. and xliii. 12. ‖ Jerem. lii. 30.

The duration of the Babylonian captivity had been previously limited by the Supreme Being to the term of seventy years, which are to be computed from the captivity of Jehoiakim in the six hundred and seventh year before Christ; and the destined period had been revealed to the Jews by the mouth of Jeremiah at the time of its commencement.* Isaiah, speaking prophetically concerning Cyrus above an hundred years antecedently to his birth, had pronounced him to be the monarch destined in the councils of God to restore the people of Judah to their native land.† Accordingly, "in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia," (the second year after he had become sovereign of the East by the death of his father Cambyses king of Persia, and his father-in-law Cyaxares king of Media; and five hundred and thirty-six years before the christian era,) "that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth "of Jeremiah might be accomplished; the Lord stir-"red up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made "a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put "it also in writing, saying: Thus saith Cyrus, king "of Persia All the kingdoms of the earth hath the "Lord God of heaven given me; and he hath charged "me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in "Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The "Lord his God be with him: and let him go up."‡ Cyrus at the same time commanded that assistance should be given to the poor Jews, in order to enable them to undertake the journey; and delivered up the vessels of gold and silver, brought away from the temple of God to Babylon, that they might be placed in the new temple, which was now to be erected.§

In consequence of this encouragement, great numbers belonging to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, having been joined also by many individuals of the ten tribes: and amounting altogether to near fifty thousand, servants and proselytes being included;|| returned to Jerusalem under the conduct of Zerubbabel (otherwise

* Jer. xxv. 11. 12. † Isa. xliv. 28. xlv. 1—6. ‡ 2 Chron. xxvi. 23. 23.
§ Ezra i. 4. 7. 8. || Ezra ii. 64, 65.

called Sheshbazzar*) a chief descendant from David, and of Joshua the high priest. In the beginning of the following year they proceeded to rebuild the temple on its old foundations. In this work the Samaritans desired to join. These were the posterity of the Cutheans and other colonists, who had been placed about two hundred years before that time by the king of Assyria in the land of Israel; and had united with the service of Jehovah the worship of their peculiar idols.† The Jews rejected the proposal: and the Samaritans, eager for revenge, exerted themselves to impede the rebuilding of the city partly by force of arms, and partly by misrepresentations addressed to the court of Persia.‡ The work was by these means interrupted: but a favourable decree having at length been obtained from Darius, it was resumed and completed: and the new temple was solemnly dedicated twenty years after the Jews had begun to rebuild it. The Jews had been strongly excited to zeal and perseverance in the undertaking by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. And when the aged Jews, some of whom had seen the former temple, wept at the recollection of its superior magnificence; deploring also the irrecoverable loss of the ark, the rod of Aaron, the two tables of stone, the pot of manna which had been preserved by Divine appointment from the days of Joshua, and the rest of its miraculous distinctions; Haggai was commissioned to assure them that the glory of this latter house should be greater than the glory of the former :§ a prediction fulfilled when that latter house was glorified by the presence of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

* Compare Ezra iii. 8. 10. with v. 16. † 2 Kings xvii. 24.—41.

‡ This hostile conduct appears to have been the source of that rooted aversion, with which the Jews continued for several centuries to view the Samaritans. It was aggravated by subsequent quarrels, and by the asylum always afforded at Samaria to fugitive and discontented Jews. Long before the time of our Saviour the Samaritans had entirely renounced idolatry. Still, however, the Jews had "no dealings with the Samaritans;" and used the very name of Samaritan as a term of the highest reproach.

§ Ezra iii. 12. Haggai, ii. 2.—9.

About fifty years afterwards Ezra, invested with ample powers by Artaxerxes, arrived from Babylon; bringing with him some additional vessels belonging to the temple, and accompanied by about fifteen hundred Jews. He employed himself with great diligence in reforming abuses and transgressions prevalent among the people. Thirteen years after his arrival he was joined by Nehemiah, appointed governor of Judea by Artaxerxes, with authority to repair the ruined walls of Jerusalem: an undertaking which notwithstanding the opposition of factions and of surrounding enemies, was at length effected. At this time Ezra appears to have devoted his attention wholly to religious concerns, and to the collection and revisal of the canonical books of the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The Jewish people now deliberately renewed their covenant with God: and from that period to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, they faithfully abstained from every species of idolatrous worship.

After the days of Nehemiah no mention is made of any distinct governor of Judea while it continued subject to the Persians. The country was regarded as a part of the province of Syria. In the time of Alexander the Great the Jews exhibited a signal proof of fidelity to their engagements by refusing, on the ground of their allegiance which they owned to Persia, to supply that conqueror, then occupied in the siege of Tyre, with the succours which he required of them. Alexander, having at length rendered himself master of Tyre, marched, inflamed with resentment, at the head of his army towards Jerusalem. At a short distance from that city he was met by a solemn procession conducted by the High Priest, Jaddua, in his pontifical robes. Alexander, on their near approach, hastened forward; and to the extreme astonishment of his followers, bowed himself down before the High Priest, and adored the name of Jehovah inscribed on his mitre. In reply to Parmenio, who expressed his surprise that the victorious monarch of so many nations should pay reverence to a Jewish priest; Alexander declared that many years before, when he had been revolving his medita-

tated expedition against Persia, the appearance of this very person had stood before him, and had promised him success in the name of God. Alexander accompanied the High Priest to Jerusalem, offered sacrifices in the temple, and bestowed many privileges and immunities on the Jews: but gave an evasive answer to the Samaritans, whom his unexpected bounty to the Jews encouraged to apply for similar favours.* Nor were these the only proofs of regard which he shewed to the Jews. When he founded Alexandria, he fixed many of that nation there; and bestowed on them the same rights as were enjoyed by the Macedonians. And when the Samaritans rebelled against him, he assigned their country to the Jews, to be held by them under the same exemptions from tribute as Judea.

Soon after the death of Alexander, an event which took place three hundred and twenty-three years before Christ; Palestine, in the division of the Macedonian empire, fell under the power of Ptolemy king of Egypt; and about an hundred years afterwards passed into the hand of the Grecian kings of Syria; who permitted the Jews to be governed by their own laws under the High Priest and his council. In consequence of the intermediate situation of their country between Egypt and Syria they suffered much and frequently from the contentions, which arose between those rival empires. The Greek language gradually spread into familiar use among them. And from their connection with foreigners they progressively imbibed foreign manners and foreign vices. Their High Priests became corrupt, obtaining the office by purchase from the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes; and recommending themselves to him by lending their aid to draw aside the people from the observance of the Mosaic law to the adoption of Grecian customs. By his hand, however, Providence inflicted on the Jews a memorable chastisement. Irritated by the opposition which he had experienced in some of his plans, he seized upon the city; slaughtered or sold for slaves vast

* Josephi Antiq. lib. ii. c. 8. and see Bishop Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies, 3d edition, vol. ii. p. 37—47.

multitudes of the inhabitants; despoiled and shattered the Temple itself; and at length abolished the daily sacrifice; burned all the copies of the law which he could discover; fixed an image of Jupiter in the Temple; and endeavoured to constrain the people throughout the whole land by the most cruel tortures to submit to the worship of idols. After some few years, and about one hundred and sixty-seven before the Christian era, God was pleased to raise up a deliverer to his people in Mattathias the Maccabee, a priest of equal piety and fortitude; who levied an army against the tyrant, and pushed on the war with success. After his death, the celebrated Judas Maccabeus and his other sons repeatedly overcame the Syrian armies; and ultimately expelled them from Judea. The Temple was repaired and purified; the observance of the Mosaic law restored; and the supreme authority, civil as well as ecclesiastical, was united for several generations in the head of the Maccabean family, of whom Aristobulus was the first who assumed the title of king. In a contest for the crown between two of his descendants, about sixty-five years before Christ, both parties applied for assistance to the Romans. Pompey availed himself of these dissensions to render Judea tributary to Rome. He appointed Hyrcanus, one of the competitors, High Priest; but allowed him not to possess any other denomination than that of prince. Some years afterwards the avarice of Crassus plundered the Temple of all its treasures. During the domestic troubles which engaged the attention of the Romans on the death of Julius Cæsar; Hyrcanus was deprived of his authority by his nephew Antigonus, who assumed the regal title. Herod, an Edomite, the son of one of the officers of Hyrcanus, repairing to Rome, and being there appointed king of Judea, took Antigonus prisoner; and sent him into Italy, where he was put to death. Being thus established in the quiet possession of the country, Herod gradually augmented his dominions: and expended vast sums in adorning Jerusalem, and in repairing and enlarging the buildings of the Temple. To his family and his subjects he was a cruel and sanguin-

ary tyrant. His reign is memorable for the birth of the Saviour of the world; whom he dreaded as a rival, and endeavoured to destroy by the slaughter at Bethlehem. In the following year he died in the agonies of a most loathsome distemper. His territories were distributed by the Romans, who ratified the disposition which he had made in his will, among his three sons, thenceforth called tetrarchs or ethnarchs. Archelaus governed the ancient possessions of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, together with Samaria, and the land of Edom. Herod Antipas, by whom John the Baptist was beheaded and Jesus Christ derided before his crucifixion, ruled in Galilee and Peræa. Philip obtained the districts of Trachonitis and Ituræa. Archelaus, in the seventh year of the Christian era, (which era, according to the received computation, begins with the fifth year after the birth of Christ,) was deprived of his government by the Romans, in consequence of the complaints of his subjects. His dominions were immediately reduced into the state of a Roman province. On the death of Philip, and the deposition of Antipas, the Roman emperor Caligula gave their dominions, with the title of king, to Herod Agrippa, the person who put to death the Apostle James, and imprisoned Peter,* and was grandson of the first Herod. He was succeeded in his title and part of his territories by his own son of the same name, the Agrippa before whom Paul† was produced by Festus the Roman governor.

In the mean time Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, had manifested himself in Judea, and fulfilled his ministry. Though uniting in himself the accomplishment of every ancient prophecy respecting the Redeemer of mankind; born of the tribe of Judah, in the lineage of David, of a pure virgin, in the town of Bethlehem; having for his forerunner a prophet, John the Baptist, commissioned to preach repentance in the power and spirit of Elijah; performing all those miracles which the predicted Saviour was to work, in proof of his Divine authority; executing his office at

* Acts xii. † Acts xxv. xxvi.

the precise time prefixed near five hundred years before by the Prophet Daniel; and repeatedly receiving in the sight and hearing of the people special tokens, in attestation of his Messiaship, from God his father; He was ignominiously rejected by the Jewish nation. One general cause of offence was his appearance in that humble station, which the prophet Isaiah had expressly* foretold: while the ambitious and prejudiced minds of the Jews were blindly attached to the idea of a temporal Messiah, who should expel every foreign enemy from the land of Canaan, and reign in triumph on the throne of Jerusalem. Among the higher classes, the principal enemies of Christ were the Scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians. The Scribes a proud and corrupt set of men, were the established teachers and expounders of the Mosaic law. The Pharisees were a religious sect, who distorted that law from its genuine import by the traditional interpretations and accessions with which they loaded it: and under the mask of much outward and ceremonial sanctity disguised the utmost depravity of heart and conduct. The Sadducees held as their distinguishing tenet, that there was to be no future life; and were, as might be expected, practically regardless of virtue in this. The Herodians were, as their name intimates, persons devoted to the interests of Herod; and formed a political faction rather than a religious party.—These jarring sects, enraged at the boldness and severity with which Christ reproved their vices, and dreading from his influence the ruin of their power, co-operated for his destruction. The common people at first received him with joy: but afterwards, according to the usual instability of popular favour, they listened to the calumnious artifices of his persecutors, and aided with vehement and clamorous importunity the demand of their superiors for his crucifixion. With this demand Pilate, the Roman governor, though avowing his conviction of the perfect innocence of Christ, and vainly attempting by washing his hands in the presence of the multitude to transfer the whole guilt of that innocent blood from himself to

* Isaiah liii.

them ; while they blasphemously cried out, " his blood be on us and on our children ;" flagitiously complied. Christ was nailed to the cross ; and, while the earth quaked, and the heavens were darkened, and the beholders stood aghast with astonishment and terror, yielded up his life as the great atoning sacrifice for the sins of the human race.

The measure of Jewish guilt was now full : and the vengeance of Heaven, of which that infatuated people had been mercifully forewarned by the prophets and by Christ himself, was poured out upon them : and poured out by the hands of that very nation whom they had instigated to cut off the Messiah. Irritated by the oppression of the Roman governors, they broke out into open rebellion against Florus, in the reign of Nero. Cestius, and afterwards Vespasian, took many cities, and slaughtered immense multitudes of the Jews. At length, at the time of the passover, in the seventy-first year of the Christian era, when the principal part of the nation, assembled from many different countries for the purpose of celebrating that solemnity, were cooped up, as victims prepared for slaughter, within the walls of Jerusalem ; Titus encamped his army before that devoted city. Unconscious that he was exactly fulfilling the predictions of Christ,* he surrounded the whole city with an uninterrupted bulwark, nearly five miles in circuit. The miseries which the Jews then sustained from famine, from pestilence, from the assaults of the Romans, and from the implacable fury of contending parties among themselves, far surpass in horror every account of any siege in the records of the world.† The city was taken, burned to the ground, and razed from its foundations. Eleven hundred thousand Jews perished during the siege. Of ninety-seven thousand captives, some were reserved to grace the triumphal return of Titus to Rome ; and the rest dispersed as slaves or as criminals throughout the empire. A subsequent

* Luke, xix. 43.

† See a very striking summary of the events of these " days of ven- " geance," and of the completion of every particular in the prophecies of Christ respecting the destruction of Jerusalem, in Archbishop Newcome's " Observations on our Lord's Conduct," 2d edit. 8vo. p. 203—276.

revolt, in the reign of Adrian, carried on with the most furious outrages by the Jews, great numbers of whom had again collected in their native land, was followed by the slaughter of more than five hundred thousand, and by their entire expulsion from Judea. From that day to the present, during a period of seventeen centuries, they have had no national existence. They have continued, according to the unfailing truth of prophecy, "scattered among all people from one end of the earth "unto the other; an astonishment, a proverb, and a "by-word among all nations."*

Though, in the language of St. Paul, "the vail is "still upon their hearts;"† though they still continue inveterately hostile to Christianity; yet to the devout and reflecting among them the disappointment of their expectations as to the coming of the Messiah, and the long continuance of their calamitous dispersion, are subjects of extreme embarrassment. When Jesus Christ entered on his public ministry, they were confessedly looking out ‡ with great anxiety for the promised Redeemer; as the time predicted by Daniel for his manifestation was arrived. Jesus Christ they rejected: and no other person has since appeared, in whom their descendants perceive any of the characteristics of the Messiah. To account for this seeming failure of the accomplishment of the prediction has long been, as it still continues, to the Jews a very difficult and perplexing task. Some of their rabbis allege in general terms, that the wickedness of their nation prevented the Messiah from being sent at the appointed period. Others, finding themselves unable to reconcile this solution with the truth of the promises of God, affirm, that he was actually sent into the world at the time specified by Daniel; but that he forebore, in consequence of the sinful state of the Jews, to make

* Deut. xxviii. 37. 64. † 2 Cor. iii. 15.

‡ Thus, when John the Baptist began to preach, "the people were in "expectation, and all men mused in their hearts whether he were the "Christ or not;" Luke. iii. 15. and a deputation of priests and Levites was sent from Jerusalem to put the question to him, John, i. 19.—27. Tacitus (Hist. lib. v. c. 13.) and Suetonius (lib. viii. c. 4.) record the general hope of the approach of the predicted Deliverer.

himself known; and that, for similar reasons, he has still continued in obscurity. They are however entirely unable to discover what those heinous transgressions are, which have occasioned their disappointment and their miseries. From idolatry, the great crime of their forefathers, they have been free for above two thousand years. And for that crime, detestable as it was in the sight of God, a captivity of only seventy years was deemed a sufficient punishment.——"I would fain learn of "thee, out of the testimonies of the law, and the pro- "phets, and other Scriptures, why the Jews are thus "smitten in this captivity wherein we are: which may "properly be called the perpetual anger of God, because "it hath no end. For it is now above a thousand years "since we were carried captive by Titus. And yet our "fathers, who worshipped idols, killed the prophets, and "cast the law behind their back, were punished only "with a seventy years captivity; and then brought home "again! But now there is no end of our calamities: "nor do the prophets promise any." It was thus that Rabbi Samuel Moroccanus wrote about seven hundred years since, to his friend.* The great council of the Jews, assembled five hundred and fifty years afterwards in Hungary to deliberate on that very subject, found it altogether inexplicable.† It is at this moment equally inexplicable to the Jews. Nay every additional year aggravates the difficulty. But the difficulty, insuperable to the Jews, is none to us. Their own imprecation has been tremendously fulfilled. The blood of Christ has been "on them and on their children."

Such has been the history of the chosen people of God from the calling of their forefather Abraham to the present day; a period of nearly three thousand eight hundred years. Their situation has in all ages been characterised by miracles Their preservation is at this moment a standing miracle. The hostile tribes of invaders, who successively established themselves in Great Britain, discordant in religion and in manners, Saxons, Danes, and Normans, are all absorbed and lost

* See Bishop Patrick's Commentary on Genesis, xlix. 10.

† Appendix to the Bishop of Clogher's Dissertation on the Revelations.

n one common mass. The innumerable hosts of Pagan barbarians, who overwhelmed the Christian empire of Rome, speedily coalesced with the natives whom they had subdued, each host in the region where it settled, into one homogeneous assemblage. Faith and practice, laws and customs, even personal appearance and complexion, became similar, in the course of a very few centuries, among the victors and the vanquished. Not so with the Jews. Scattered in small parcels throughout many nations; now here living under their own laws, and in few places indulged in the free exercise of their religion: urged by general contempt, and even in many Christian countries by shameful oppression, to withdraw themselves from notice by assimilating themselves to the natives among whom they dwell; they have everywhere multiplied under affliction, and have every where continued a distinct and separate people. Why have they thus been exempted from the common fate of nations? they have been exempted, that after having in their dispersion exhibited to the inhabitants of opposite extremities of the earth a stupendous proof of the power and justice of God; they may be restored at the time predetermined in his counsels to the perpetual possession of their native land. There is scarcely any topic on which prophecy is more copious in the Old Testament, than on the final restoration of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Our Saviour, when he foretells that "Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the "Gentiles *until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*;*" clearly implies that after an appointed time it should revert to its original possessors. St. Paul, in perfect harmony with the old prophets, predicts the future conversion of the Jews to the religion of their crucified Saviour, and the powerful and glorious effect which their conversion, together with the signal wonders with which their re-establishment shall be attended, will produce in opening the eyes of unbelieving nations, and convincing them of the truth of the Christain faith.†

* Luke xxi. 24. † Romans xi.

From the history of this people let it be your care to draw and apply to your own heart and conduct the great practical truth, so forcibly impressed, and so beautifully illustrated by the Apostle* "Because of unbelief "they were broken off: and thou standest by faith. "Be not high minded; but fear." Reflect on the unparalleled blessings by which they were distinguished. They are the chosen nation, "to whom pertaineth the "adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giv-"ing of the law, and the service of God, and the pro-"mises: whose are the fathers; and of whom, as con-"cerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God, "blessed forever."† They were the favoured "olive tree," planted in the vineyard of God. The branches became unfruitful, and were broken off; and the Gentiles, the "branches of the wild olive tree," were graf-"ted into their place. Be not high minded; but fear. "If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest "he also spare not thee. Behold the goodness and se-"verity of God: on them which fell, severity: but to-"wards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his good-"ness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." Let this lesson of stedfastness in faith and holy obedience recur to your bosom, whenever you behold an individual of the Jewish race. Let it teach you to behold him with humility, and with kindness; and to meditate on the dealings of your Maker with the tribes of Israel. And while you consider the past and the present state of the chosen descendants of Abraham; remember the restoration that awaits them. They are "the natural branches:" and when "they no longer abide in unbe-"lief, God will graft them in again."

There is yet another lesson of useful instruction which the consideration of the Jewish history may impress with particular force upon the mind. The interpositions by which Providence guided and protected the Jews were in general, as it has already been observed, in a high degree miraculous. Yet all these signal and unmerited favours produced not in that people either durable gratitude or obedience. Remember

* Romans, xvii. 24. † Romans, ix. 4, 5.

then, in the first place, the favours which God has bestowed and is still bestowing upon yourself. These blessings are not the less, because they are bestowed daily and hourly; nor because they are bestowed on many other persons, as well as upon you. These blessings are as truly the free and unmerited gifts of your Almighty Benefactor, as the miracles wrought for the deliverance of the Israelites in Egypt, in the wilderness, in the land of Canaan. What title had you to the blessings of creation, of protection, of redemption, more than the Israelites had to a passage on dry ground through the Red Sea; to the presence of God in a cloudy pillar to guide them by day, and in a pillar of flame by night; to the supply of manna, during nearly forty years; to the supernatural destruction of the army of Sennacherib; or to the warnings during many centuries of a succession of inspired prophets? Were mighty works wrought by the hand of Omnipotence for the Jews? Those very works were wrought not for the Jews only, but for your admonition; for your benefit. Mighty as they were, mightier have been wrought for you. Christ, of whose coming and office the Jews had learned through the medium of prophecies then involved, as to matters of detail, in much obscurity, has since their day descended from Heaven; has lived as man, and suffered more than man; has made that full atonement on the cross, which the law given by Moses was intended only to prefigure and introduce. The intercession of Christ, now pleading for you at the right hand of God, was to the Jews altogether unknown. The sanctifying aid of the Holy Spirit of God, to enable you to will and to do what is acceptable to the Deity, was by the Jews very imperfectly understood. Do you admit the magnitude of those your obligations to Heaven? Ask yourself then, in the second place, whether you are leading such a life as corresponds with an avowed sense of those obligations: such a life as corresponds with a conviction of the extraordinary blessings conferred upon you by the Almighty of his own free grace. While you are wondering that the Jews, enlightened by immediate communications from above, could re-

lapse with such frequency into the darkness of idolatry; ask yourself whether, in the full enjoyment of greater light, you are not deviating into the paths of darkness. "The covetous man," saith the Scripture, "is an idolator,"* and "hath no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." The glutton is branded in the sacred volume with the same stigma: †and his end is declared to be "destruction." Whenever you permit any inclination, any passion to predominate in your heart over the fear and the love of God; you incur the guilt of idolatry. And unless through the Divine grace you sincerely repent, and turn from sin unto habitual holiness; you shall have "no inheritance in "the kingdom of Christ and of God: your end shall be "destruction."

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

IN the preceding chapters the Scriptures of the Old Testament have been regarded as sacred records of unquestionable authority. As the faith of Christians ought in every particular point to be established on rational evidence and sober conviction; it will be proper in the present chapter to lay before the reader a brief statement of the grounds, on which the claim of the Jewish Scriptures to his belief and reverence is established.

The Old testament resolves itself into two leading divisions, the canonical books, and the apocryphal books.‡

* Ephes. v. 5. † Philipp. iii. 19.

‡ These general terms, together with many of the modern names, as Genesis, Exodus, &c. by which the books of the Old Testament are distinguished, have been borrowed from the denominations used by the Greek translators and commentators. The words "canon," and "canonical," are derived from Κανων, rule: and imply that the authenticity and in-

The canonical books are those which were written by the aid and under the guidance of Divine inspiration. The apocryphal books were composed by uninspired men: and are therefore liable to error: but, on account of the religious instruction and the historical facts which they contain, were subjoined by the Jews, yet separately and as a detached appendix, to the sacred volume; and have been for the same reasons continued in that place and character by the christian church.

The canonical books were again subdivided by the Jews, for the sake of convenient reference and quotation, into three classes; and not so distinguished through any difference in the authority assigned to them, (for in that respect they were all held perfectly equal,) but though a degree of difference in the subjects of which they respectively treat. These classes were denominated "the Law," "the Prophets," and the "Psalms." "the Law" contained the five books of Moses; Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy:* and received its name from the subject most prominent in those books. In "the Prophets" were comprehended not only the books of Isaiah, and of all the other prophets to Malachi inclusively, together with the book of Job; but likewise the historical books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther: these books also having been written or revised by prophets. "The Psalms,"† included Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon, together

spiration of the books of Scripture to which they are applied have not been hastily taken for granted; but have been examined and ascertained by the proper rule or criterion. Apocrypha and Apocryphal, words derived from ἀποκρυπτω, to hide, denote that the writings to which they are affixed are not of manifest and indisputable authority.

* The five books of Moses are frequently termed the Pentateuch, a a word of Greek etymology, implying a collection of five volumes.

† This class was also termed emphatically by the Jews "writings" (chetubim;) and by the Greeks hagiographa, sacred writings. In latter times we have been accostomed to apply the terms "Scriptures," that is to say, "the writings," by way of eminence, and "the Bible," ("the Book," from the Greek word βιβλος.) to the Old and New Testaments taken collectively.

with the book of Psalms; from which book, as being placed first, and of primary importance, this concluding subdivision received its appellation.*

What proof then of the inspiration and authenticity of the canonical Scriptures of the Old Testament, in the very form in which we have them at this hour, is the utmost which even an objector could reasonably demand? He might require this and this only: satisfactory evidence that those Scriptures were written under the superintendence of inspiration: and that they have been transmitted in their primeval integrity to the present day. That proof, I apprehend, may be demonstratively furnished.

It will, however, be proper antecedently to state with precision what we mean, when we affirm that the books in question were written under the superintendence of inspiration. We do not mean that the Holy Spirit of God dictated to the inspired writer every word, or every sentence, of his composition. The Divine interference to such an extent was not requisite, as far as we may presume to judge, for the attainment of the objects which inspiration was designed to accomplish. And the opinion of its interference to that extent appears to be contradicted by the great similarity of style and manner, which is found to pervade the writings of any one of the inspired penmen considered singly; and by the striking difference in sentiment and language, by which the several writers are distinguised from each other: circumstances which indicate that each writer was permitted to follow in an ample degree the natural bent of his faculties and thoughts as to the mode of expressing the divine communications. Neither do we mean that the mind of the prophet or historian was in every

* The number of canonical books in our Bible is thirty-nine: whereas Josephus and other Jewish writers enumerate only twenty-two. The cause of the seeming difference is this: the Jews united Judges and Ruth into one volume, or book; the two books of Samuel they count as one book, and also those of Kings, and of Chronicles, respectively; Ezra and Nehemiah form one book; the Prophecies and Lamentations of Jeremiah one; and the twelve minor prophets, so called merely on account of the comparative brevity of their compositions, one.

case supernaturally impressed with the full knowledge of facts, which, by his own present observation, or by his distant recollection, or even by true and sufficient intelligence received from others, he already was thoroughly competent to describe. We mean that inspiration was given so far as was essentially necessary to effect all the purposes, special and general, for which it was bestowed; namely, to encourage the righteous and reclaim the guilty; to confirm the truth and unfold the import of the Jewish dispensation; and when that introductory system should be done away, to demonstrate the Divine origin, illustrate the nature, and forward the universal dominion, of the religion of Jesus Christ. For these purposes it seems essentially necessary that, in communicating religious truths, in declaring a revelation of unknown, or imperfectly known, transactions, and in predicting future events, the instrument employed should be preserved from all error; and in reciting facts from his own knowledge, and in drawing conclusions by the natural powers of his judgment, he should be preserved from material inaccuracy and omission. That inspiration was vouchsafed further, the Scriptures do not pronounce: that it was necessary further, there appears no sufficient reason to conclude: and consequently, that it was given further, is a position for which there seems no obligation to contend.

We may now proceed to state the several proofs, general and particular, which shew that the canonical books of the Old Testament were written under the superintendence of inspiration; and that they were preserved in their original integrity to the days of our Saviour. That they have been preserved in the same state from the coming of Christ to the present time, is a truth which will afterwards be established.

The books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, containing an account of the creation, and of the fall of man, the heads of the early annals of the world, and a full recital of the Jewish law and of the events which had happened to that nation until it had now finally reached the borders of the land

of Canaan, were written by Moses. An exception however must be made of the concluding chapter of Deuteronomy, evidently added after his death in order to complete his history: and perhaps of one or two passages (as of that in Genesis* respecting the kings of Edom) which may have been inserted by some succeeding prophet, not improbably by Ezra, for the purpose of conveying illustration or additional intelligence. I mention these slight exceptions, obvious as they are; because absurd cavils have sometimes been founded upon them, as though they afforded an argument to shew that Moses was not the author of the other parts of the books. The proofs of his having been the author of those books are numerous and decisive. The fact has ever been firmly believed by the Jews: and continues to this day to be one of the thirteen articles of their creed.† It is virtually asserted in the very books themselves: "Moses wrote all the words of the Lord; and "took the book of the covenant, and read in the audi- "ence of the people."‡ Again, near the close of the book of Deuteronomy which, it must be remembered, was in substance a recapitulation of the preceding books, it is said that, when Moses had made an end of "writing the words of this law in a book, until they "finished, Moses commanded the Levites, which bare "the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying: Take "this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark "of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be "there for a witness against thee."§ In the book of Joshua, in both the books of Kings, in the second book of Chronicles, in the books of Ezra, of Daniel, and of Malachi, the writing of the law is unequivocally ascribed to Moses.‖ And let it be observed that if we for the present admit, what will shortly be demonstrated, the inspiration of these several books of Scripture; the passages to which I have just referred are so many distinct and irrefragable testimonies to the inspiration of

* Gen. xxxvi. 31—43. † See Bishop Watson's Apology for the Bible, p. 45, 46. ‡ Exod. xxiv. 47. § Deut. xxxi. 24—26.
‖ Joshua, viii. 34, 35. xiv. 10, &c. 1 Kings, ii. 3. 2 Kings, xxiii. 25, 2 Chron. xxiii. 18. xxx. 16. Ezra, iii. 2. Dan. ix. 11—13. Malachi, iv. 4.

the books of Moses. The same remark may be extended to the first book of Chronicles, the book of Psalms, of Isaiah, and of Jeremiah; in all of which the Divine mission of Moses is attested.* Let us proceed to the evidence which the New Testament presents concerning Moses. Jesus Christ expressly affirms that Moses gave the law to the Jews.† He continually refers to that law; speaks of it with the highest reverence; appeals to it as containing decisive predictions concerning himself; affirms that had his hearers believed Moses, they would have believed himself; and that they who would not believe Moses and the prophets, would not be persuaded, though one should be raised from the dead purposely to convert them.‡ After the ascension of Christ, his apostles add their testimony in the clearest language to the fact, that the law was written by Moses, and written under the guidance of inspiration.§ And each of the five books is separately quoted or referred to by Christ himself in the Gospels; and by the sacred writers in the subsequent parts of the New Testament.‖ In recounting the attestations by which the Jewish lawgiver is thus honourably distinguished, it must not be forgotten, that when our Lord was transfigured on the mount, Moses was one of the two prophets who were commissioned to appear to him in glory.¶

* 1 Chron. xxiii. 14. Psalm ciii. 7. cv. 26. Isaiah, lxiii. 12. Jer. xv. 1.

† John, vii. 19. See also i. 17. ‡ Matt. v. 17. 18. vii. 12. xxiii. 2. Mark, x. 3. Luke, xvi. 29. 31. xx. 37. xxiv. 27. John, iii. 14. v. 46. These are by no mean all the testimonies, which the gospels bear to the authority and inspiration of the Mosaic writings.

§ See among many other passages, Acts, iii. 22. vii. 35—37. xiii. 39. xxvi. 22. xxviii. 23. Rom. x. 5. 1 Cor. x. ii. 2 Cor. 3. 7—15. Heb. iii. 2. vii. 14. x. 28. Rev. xv. 3.

‖ Of these quotations and references which are extremely nemerous, many are specified under the proper heads in Gay's Key to the Old Testament; a work which will be found highly useful to all who are solicitous to attain an accurate knowledge of the several parts of their Bible.

¶ Luke ix. 30. 31. After the numerous proofs of the Divine commission of Moses, which have been produced from the Old and New Testaments; it would be almost superfluous to mention the early Heathen writers, who concur in ascribing the Jewish law to Moses. But it is not unimportant to add, that in distant regions of the world, among the Egyptians, the Phœnicians, the Greeks, the Hindoos, traditions and practices have prevailed; which, however, loaded and debased with fable and su-

Antecedently to any particular observations on the historical books of the old Testament, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, the two books of Samuel, of Kings, and of Chronicles, together with the books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther; some general remarks may fitly be premised. After the death of Moses, historical accounts of the transactions of the Jews appear from the Scriptures to have been composed by persons professedly favoured with assistance from above, and commonly bearing the prophetic character. That Joshua was appointed by the Supreme Being to govern and instruct the Israelites is manifest. Samuel was also a prophet or seer:* and his employment as an historian, and that of other seers, is expressly stated in the first book of Chronicles;—"Now the acts of David the king, "first and last, behold they are written in the book of "Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the pro-"phet, and in the book of Gad the seer."† Again, when the acts of Solomon are mentioned, it is said, "are they not written, first and last, in the book of "Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Ahijah "the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer "against Jeroboam the son of Nebat?"‡ The acts of Rehoboam, first and last, are afterwards affirmed to be written in the book of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the seer, concerning genealogies.§ The acts of Abijah, the son of Rehoboam, and his ways, and his sayings were also written in the story of the prophet

perstition, are yet capable of being traced, as Grotius and other writers have shewn, to Patriarchal or Mosaical institutions. It is remarkable, too, as Bishop Watson pointedly observes, that the books which come nearest to the book of Genesis in age, "are those which make either the "most distinct mention of, or the most evident allusion to, the facts rela-"ted in Genesis concerning the formation of the world from a chaotic "mass; the primeval innocence and subsequent fall of man; the longe-"vity of mankind in the first ages of the world; the depravity of the "antideluvians, and the destruction of the world." Apology for the Bible, p. 75.

* That "seer" and "prophet" were terms of the same import is expressly affirmed in 1 Sam. ix. 9.

† 1 Chron. xxix. 29. ‡ 2 Chron. ix. 29. § 2 Chron. xii. 15.

Iddo.* So likewise the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, are said to be written in the book of Jehu, the son of Hanani;† which Jehu is proved by another passage in Scripture‡ to have been a prophet. The acts of Uzziah, first and last, and also the acts of Hezekiah, the prophet Isaiah is said to have written: and many of the actions of Manasseh are said to be "written among "the sayings of the seers."§ These examples warrant the conclusion, that the transactions of the other reigns, though the writers are not specifically named, were inserted into "the books of the Chronicles of the kings "of Israel and of Juhah;" those larger records, to which reference is so frequently made in the two books of the Old Testament now bearing the same name; and also in the books of Kings, by persons invested with the prophetical character. After the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, their history was continued by Ezra and Nehemiah. Though it is not expressly asserted in the Scriptures that these two holy men were prophets;‖ yet we may be well assured that, if they had not been confessedly under the guidance of inspiration, their writings would not have been added by the Jews to the inspired books of the sacred volume; nor included by our Saviour, as will speedily appear to have been the case, among the canonical books of the Old Testament.

The book of Joshua may owe its name either to the subject of which it treats, the establishment of the Israelites in the promised land by Joshua, with an account of whose death the narrative terminates; or to its having been actually written by Joshua himself, with the exception of the five concluding verses of the book, and perhaps of some other verses,¶ which may have been inserted for the purpose of elucidation by one of

* 2 Chron. xiii. 22. † 2 Chron. xx. 34. ‡ 1 Kings xvi. 1.

§ 2 Chron. xxvi. 22. xxxii. 32. xxxiii. 19.

‖ Nehemiah however professes to act under the immediate guidance of God. Nehem. ii. 8, 18.

¶ Josh. xix. 47, 48. The remark may also apply to xv. 13.—19 —if the same expedition when mentioned in Judges xi. 11. be not there mentioned, according to the manner in which some think the Hebrew words should be translated, as the recapitulation of events which had taken place during the life of Joshua.

the subsequent inspired writers, or by Ezra, when he collated the canon of Scripture. The opinion, however, that the book was written by Joshua, rests on much stronger grounds than the other. It is supported by the accordant sentiments of the earliest Jewish commentators; by the passages in the book itself which indicate that it was composed by a person cotemporary with the events which he describes:* and by a passage near the close of the book, which proves that Joshua himself wrote at least a part of its contents, and probably therefore the whole, with the exceptions mentioned above, "in the book of "the Law of God;"† the volume which Moses had deposited by the side of the ark. The predictions of Joshua concerning the rebuilding of Jericho are denominated in the first book of Kings "the words of God."‡ And the book of Joshua is repeatedly noticed, either in the way of quotation or of reference, in the New Testament as well as in the Jewish Scriptures.§

The book of Judges, comprising the history of the Israelites during rather more than three hundred years; a period in which their native governors were distinguished by the title of Judges; has been ascribed to different authors. It is attributed with the greatest probability to Samuel: as he was the last of the Judges; as he is known to have written a subsequent part of the Jewish history; and as a comparison of some passages, in the book itself shews it to have been written in his time. Some of these passages stating that the events which they relate happened "in those days, when "there was no king in Israel,"‖ imply that the book was written when there was a king, namely after the accession of Saul: while another passage,¶ which describes the Jebusites to be still dwelling in Jerusalem,

* The author represents himself as one of those who had passed through the river Jordan, when divided before the Israelites,—v. 1.—and speaks of Rahab, who hid the spies at Jericho, as still alive.—vi. 25.

† xxiv. 26. ‡ 1 Kings xvi. 34. See also Josh. vi. 26.

§ As 1 Chron. ii. 7. xii. 15. Isaiah xxviii. 21. Acts vii. 45. Heb. xi. 30, 31. xiii. 5. James ii. 25.

‖ Judges xvii. 6. xviii. 1. xix. 1. xxi. 25. ¶ Judges i. 21.

proves it to have been composed before David ascended the throne of Israel; since immediately after that event he expelled them.* Quotations are taken from this book, or references made to it, in both Testaments.†

The book of Ruth, which records with much affecting simplicity the short history of a Moabitish woman, who became a proselyte to the Jewish faith, and was an ancestor of David, belongs also to the times of the Judges.‡ The writer is not certainly known; but is generally supposed by Jews as well as Christians to have been Samuel. It was evidently not written until after the birth of David;§ nor, probably, until David was rendered an object of general attention by being anointed king. A principal purpose of the writer is to shew that David, in conformity with the prophecy respecting the Messiah who was to spring from him, was regularly descended from Judah. The genealogy is confirmed, with a direct allusion to Ruth, by Saint Matthew.‖

The two books of Samuel carry on the history of the Israelites, during a period of about one hundred and fifty years, from the birth of Samuel to the close of the reign of David. As Samuel is expressly declared in a passage already quoted from the first book of Chronicles ¶ to have recorded together with Nathan and Gad the actions of David: there appears no improbability in the opinion maintained by the early Jewish commentators, and adopted by many learned Christians, that Samuel composed the first twenty-four chapters of the first book:** and that Nathan and Gad were the inspired writers, who continued his work. Several very noble prophecies are contained in these books. Our Saviour refers pointedly to the first book,†† when vindicating on a particular occasion the conduct of his disciples: and it is to be observed, that in the Hebrew canon the two books were considered as forming but one. The latter portion however, now called the second book, is not unnoticed in the New Testament.‡‡

* 2 Sam. v. † As 1 Sam. xii 9, 11. 2 Sam. xi. 21. Isaiah ix. 4. x. 26. Heb. xi. 32. ‡ Ruth, i. 1. § iv. 22. ‖ Mat. i. 3, 6. ¶ 1 Chon. xxix. 29.
** His death is related in the beginning of xxv. †† Mat. xii. 3, 4.
‡‡ Heb. i. 5.

The two books of Kings, which form only one book in the Hebrew canon, continue the history during nearly an hundred and thirty years to the Babylonian captivity. The author of them is not ascertained. The uniformity of the style and manner throughout both of them affords a presumptive argument that the whole was arranged by one person. And the prevailing opinion that they were compiled and abridged by Ezra, or some other inspired person, from the larger accounts of the acts of the kings of Israel and Judah, which have been already mentioned as written by Nathan, Gad, Ahijah, and other succeeding prophets. To these, or similar, records frequent reference is made.* In these books many striking predictions are contained. Each of these books is authoritatively cited by our Saviour: and the first book is afterwards quoted and referred to by his apostles.†

The two books of Chronicles, originally regarded as one by the Jews, recapitulate the Jewish history from the reign of Saul to the Babylonian captivity: confirming by their agreement the historical books of Scripture already noticed; and adding various genealogical tables and other particulars either not stated in those books, or less copiously detailed. They are supposed to have been compiled from the records specified in the preceding paragraph: and probably by Ezra. This account of the manner in which the books of Chronicles, and also of Kings, were composed, is confirmed by an observation which has been made by persons, who have studied them with accuracy: namely, that some of the expressions contained in them are those of cotemporary description; while others denote that the writer is recording transactions which had long taken place. The books of Chronicles were compiled after the captivity; as they mention the restoration of the Jews under Cyrus.§ They contain occasional predictions. And the first book, and consequently the second, which in the days of our Saviour was a part of it, receiv-

* 1 Kings, xi. 41. xiv. 29. and in various other places. † Mat. xii. 42. Luke iv. 25—27. ‡ Romans, xi. 2—4. James, v. 17, 18.
§ 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22, 23.

ed undoubted sanction by being quoted in the new Testament.*

The book of Ezra, so denominated from the name of its author, takes up the Jewish history from the second book of Chronicles, with a repetition of the two last verses of which this continuation opens; and relates the transactions of nearly eighty years. Part of the work, namely from the eighth verse of the fourth chapter to the twenty-seventh verse of the seventh chapter, is composed in the Chaldee tongue; probably from a desire in the historian to recite with accurate fidelity the public letters, discourses and decrees there mentioned, which were framed originally in that language. Of Ezra himself I have already had such repeated occasion to take incidental notice, that much needs not to be added. He was descended from Aaron, and succeeded Zerubbabel in the government of Judea; which he held about ten or twelve years. We afterwards find him heartily co-operating in the pious labours of his successor Nehemiah.†

The book of Nehemiah is a continuation of Ezra's history during thirty-six additional years; and on that account, though confessedly written by the former, was subjoined in the Hebrew canon to the work of the latter. With Nehemiah the Sacred history terminates, about four hundred and nine years before the Christian era. There is some authority for the opinion of the Jewish writers, that he assisted Ezra in collecting the canonical Scriptures.† I do not know that there is any particular and separate reference in the New Testament to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, or to the book of Esther. Their title, however, to a place among the inspired writings will be established by the testimonies yet to be produced of our Saviour and his apostles to the whole collective body of the Jewish Scriptures, of which these three books indisputably formed a part.

The book of Esther relates the history of a Jewish captive, who became the wife of Ahasuerus, king of Per-

* Mat. i. Luke, iii. See also Heb. i. 5, and compare 1 Chron. xxix. 10 11. with Mat. vi. 13. and Rev. v. 12, 13.

† Neham. viii. 2. 6. ‡ 2 Maccab. ii. 13.

sia, and the instrument in the hands of the Supreme Being by which a signal deliverance was wrought for her countrymen. Ezra, among others, has been accounted the author of the book; but on that subject nothing is certainly known. It has also been a question, which of the Persian monarchs is intended by the denomination Ahasuerus. The opinion, however, of the Jewish historian Josephus, who affirms Artexerxes Longimanus to be the person, is deemed to rest on the most solid foundations: and consequently the events related took place about four hundred and fifty years before Christ. The fidelity of the narrative is attested by the annual solemnity with which the Jews after their return from the captivity continued to celebrate the festival of Purim; a feast instituted* in consequence of the deliverance which they experienced through the intercession of Esther. It is observed by the Jews to this day.

From the examination of the historical books we may proceed to consider the remaining canonical books of the Old Testament, according to the order in which they stand in the Bible.

The book of Job has been ascribed to various authors. The subject also has been sometimes ragarded as a poetical fiction, sometimes as an allegory, rather than as a real history. The reality however, of the history, though the style be poetical, is confirmed not only by the uniform testimony of eastern tradition; but by the prophecies of Ezekiel, in which the Deity repeatedly† mentions Job, as a man of extraordinary righteousness, in conjunction with Daniel and Noah; and by the reference made by St. James‡ to the patience of Job and to its reward, as an example and encouragement to suffering Christians. The land of Uz, where Job resided, is supposed, with much probability,

* Esther iii. 7. and ix. 23. 28. It is also called among the Jews the feast of Haman and Mordecai.

† Ezek. xiv. 14. 16. 18. 20.

‡ James v. 11. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job; and *have seen* "*the end* of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." A form of expression very unlikely to be applied to a fictitious character, or to fictitious events.

to have been in Edom: though by some writers it is placed in Arabia Deserta. From the longevity of Job, and from his silence respecting the Mosaic dispensation, he is thought to have lived during the period when the Israelites were in bondage in Egypt. The style of the work, and the customs incidentally described in it, bear the marks of patriarchal antiquity. And it appears to have been composed either by Job himself, or from cotemporary memorials committed to writing by himself or his friends. The book of Job contains most sublime descriptions of the power and other attributes of God; and is expressly cited by St. Paul as sacred Scripture.*

Of the Psalms the principal part was composed by David; and his name has been in consequence affixed to the book. They are a collection of Sacred hymns written on various occasions and under various circumstances. Some of them were prepared for particular solemnities in the Jewish worship: others appear to have been designed generally to celebrate the glorious perfections of God: and others to have been drawn from the Psalmist by the situations of joy or of sorrow, in which he was successively involved. Hence they abound in sentiments of the purest devotion; in grand and animated descriptions of the works of the Almighty, and of his dealings with men; and in the warmest effusions of prayer and praise, of gratitude and thanksgiving, of humble contrition, and of pious hope. They abound also in the most impressive and consoling predictions. One greater than David is continually presenting himself, even Christ the Redeemer. Divine inspiration so guided the Psalmist, that in many instances his words, at the same time that they referred with sufficient precision to the circumstances of his own life, prefigured in terms the most accurate and the most sublime, the humiliation, the sufferings, the triumphant resurrection, and the eternal kingdom of the Messiah. The book of Psalms is continually cited as of inspired authority by our Saviour and his Apostles; and the

* 1 Cor. iii. 19.

prophetic import of many separate passages illustrated and explained.*

The book of Proverbs, which were composed by Solomon according to the declarations at the commencement and in a subsequent part of the work†, consists partly of maxims of religious instructions, partly of lessons of prudence and discretion drawn up conformably to the custom of the east, in a pointed and sententious form. The inspiration of Solomon is manifest from the accounts concerning him, which are supplied by the books of Kings and Chronicles. Learned men have shewen that this book has furnished many heathen authors with their brightest sentiments. It is imitated, in thought and expression, by several of the Sacred writers who succeeded Solomon: and is cited in various parts of the New Testament.‡

The book of Ecclesiastes is another of the compositions of Solomon ;|| and is commonly supposed to have been written towards the close of his life when distress and anguish had reclaimed him from idolatry. Its object is to convince men, by an examination of particulars, that every earthly possession is vain in its nature, and necessarily accompanied with anxiety: and thence to lead them piously to fix their hearts on that state, in which there will be no vanity nor vexation of spirit. In the course of his argument the writer sometimes produces, without previous notice, the absurd sayings and tenets of supposed objectors for the purpose of refuting them. From a want of attention to this circumstance we occasionally hear at the present day positions asserted on the authority of Solomon, which he quoted only to condemn. The conclusion of the work is worthy of any inspired author: "Fear God, and keep "his commandments; for this is the whole duty of "man.' For God shall bring every work into Judg-

* The Sacred writers have fixed the sense, by their citations, of nearly fifty distinct Psalms. The titles prefixed in our Bible to the several Psalms are often of conjectural authority; and sometimes indicate not the composer of the Psalm, but the person appointed to set it to music.

† Prov. i. 1. xxv. 1. ‡ See Luke xiv. 10. Rom. xii. 16. 17. 20. 1 Pet. iv. 8. v. 5. James iv. 6. || Eccl. i. 1.

" ment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or " whether it be evil."*

The book called the Song of Solomon, from the name of its author, is generally allowed to have been composed by him as a nuptial poem, on his marriage with the daughter of Pharaoh. Solomon is related to have written above a thousand songs or poems† of which this alone (with the exception perhaps of some few of the Psalms which may have been his productions) was admitted into the canon of the Jewish Scriptures. This single circumstance appears to intimate that under the allegorical veil of nuptial emblems a higher meaning was concealed: and the opinion seems confirmed by various passages in the work not easily admitting a literal interpretation. Most commentators, therefore, have concluded that in shadowing out things divine by earthly figures, this book has a typical reference to the then future connection between Christ and the Christian church: a connection which in the Psalms, and also in the New Testament, is represented, in accommodation to human ideas, under the figurative allusion of the closest and most affectionate of all human connections, that of marriage.‡

The remaining canonical books of the Old Testament are confessedly the works of the several prophets whose names they respectively bear. To declare to the Jews the impending judgments of God for idolatry and other sins; to comfort that people, when in affliction and captivity, with promises of deliverance; and to denounce against their oppressors the retributive punishments merited by their cruelty and rapine, were among the special objects of the prophetical commission. But the most noble and important office of prophetic inspiration was to bear testimony to the Messiah; to predict his coming, the circumstances of his birth, of his

* Eccl. xii. 13, 14. compare 2 Cor. v. 10. † 1 Kings, iv. 32.

‡ Psalm xlv. 2 Cor. xi. 2. Ephes. v. 25—32. Rev. xix. 7. 8. xx. 9. xxii. 17. The covenant between God and the Jewish church is very frequently denoted in the prophets by emblems borrowed from marriage. See Isaiah, liv. 5. xii. 5. Ezek. xvi. &c. Hosea, ii. 16. and various other passages in the Old Testament.

life, and of his sufferings; his victory over death and the grave, and the powers of darkness; the diffusion of his religion over the face of the earth; the final restoration of the twelve tribes of Israel to their own land in the faith of the Saviour whom they pierced; and the complete union of Jews and Gentiles, of all countries, tongues and nations, into one fold under one shepherd. That the prophets were divinely inspired, the speedy accomplishment of many of their predictions attested to their own cotemporaries. To us, who live after the lapse of numerous ages, in which so many additional predictions have been verified; who know that the great Redeemer has suffered and performed what they only foretold; who see at this moment the predictions delivered by Moses, the earliest of the prophets, nearly four thousand years ago, verifying in every quarter of the world in the fate of the Jews "scattered among "all people from one end of the earth to the other, an "astonishment, and a proverb, and a byeword among "all nations:" to us the kind of evidence, which was bestowed on the cotemporaries of the prophets in a degree sufficiently convincing, comes with an accumulation of force irresistible to every thing but ignorance or obduracy. To this evidence the New Testament adds its fullest attestation. The proofs which it supplies of the inspiration of the separate books of prophecy will be noticed in the short account of each book about to be given. But in this place it is proper to mention some of the many testimonies which are afforded to the writings of the prophets taken collectively. "Prophecy came "not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of "God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."* —"God, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake "in time past unto the fathers by the prophets."†— "If they hear not Moses and the prophets; neither "would they be persuaded, though one rose from the "dead."—‡ "Beginning at Moses, and all the pro- "phets, he (Christ) expounded unto them in all the "Scriptures the things concerning himself."§

* 2 Pet. xxi. 21. † Heb. i. 1.
‡ Luke, xvi. 31. § Luke xxiv. 27.

Isaiah prophesied, as we learn from himself,* in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. He probably did not enter upon his office until towards the close of Uzziah's reign, about seven hundred and fifty eight years before Christ; and he was certainly living about forty-five years afterwards, in the fourteenth year of the reign of Hezekiah.† His work, with the exception of some historical parts contained in it, is composed according to the general custom of the Hebrew prophets,‡ in metre. It is characterized by grandeur of conception and elevation of style; and abounds in passages of the sublimest poetry. The predictions of Isaiah were addressed principally to the kingdom of Judah; though he occasionally adverts to the ten tribes. He proclaims the impending destruction of the Assyrian empire; the utter and perpetual desolation of Babylon; and the subversion of the Philistines, Syrians, Egyptians, and other surrounding nations. And in his predictions concerning the Messiah and the final glories of the Christian church he expatiates with such accuracy and such magnificence of description, that he has been emphatically denominated the evangelical prophet. His book is quoted with high distinction by Christ and the apostles.§

Jeremiah was called to the prophetic ministry six hundred and twenty-eight years before the Christian era, in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah king of Judah; and continued in the exercise of it during rather more than forty years, until the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.‖ In his writings, which are distinguished for precision an energy, and for their peculiar pathos; the Babylonian captivity, the time of

* Isaiah, i. 1. † 2 Kings xx. i.

‡ On the subject of Hebrew poetry, and the discriminating excellencies of the several Hebrew poets, consult Bishop Lowth's admirable Prelections on Hebrew Poetry, his preliminary discourse to his new Translation of Isaiah, and Archbishop Newcome's Translation of the minor Prophets.

§ As in Matt. 14. viii. 17. xii. 17. xiii. 14. Mark, vii. 6. Luke iii. 4. iv. 17. John, vii. 39. 41. Acts, viii. 28. xxviii. 25. Romans, ix. 27. x. 16. 20. &c.

‖ Jerem. i. 1--3.

its continuance, the restoration of the Jews, the destruction of Babylon and of some other nations, and many circumstances respecting the birth and office of the Messiah, are prominent features. He is specifically mentioned and quoted in the New Testament.*

Ezekiel prophesied in Mesopotamia, on the banks of the river Chebar, where he had been placed with many of his captive countrymen by the Chaldeans.† His prophecies, the chief portion of which is not written in poetical measure, are remarkable for indignant vehemence of style. They are darkened by mysterious visions; and contain many things yet to be accomplished. Of some parts, however, as of the destruction of the Ammonites, Moabites, Philistines, and other countries by Nebuchadnezzar, the accomplishment was speedy: and to the irrecoverable desolation of Tyre, according to his predictions, many revolving ages have borne witness. Saint John in the book of Revelations appears to allude in a pointed manner to Ezekiel.‡

Daniel, who was of the royal house of Judah, was carried captive six hundred and six years before Christ, with Jehoiachim from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar; and was advanced by that monarch and his successors, in consequence of Divine inspiration signally bestowed upon him, to the highest offices in the Babylonian empire. Amid the ensnaring allurements of his exalted condition, he exhibited for the instruction of future ages, and of statesmen in particular, a glorious example of active and unshaken piety; and of stedfast obedience to the commandments of God, in defiance of all personal hazard, and of the crooked suggestions of worldly wisdom. He lived to see his countrymen return, on the accession of Cyrus, to their native land: but being then nearly ninety years of age, he probably remained in Babylon. His predictions, which are written in prose, relate principally to the four great empires which succeeded each other, the Assyrian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman; the precise time of the coming of

* Matt. ii. 17, 18. xvi. 14. † Ezek. i. 1—3.

‡ Compare Rev. xix. 17. to the end, and xx. 8, 9. with Ezekiel xxxviii. and xxxix. to 20.

Christ; the rise and duration of Antichrist; the final triumph and universal prevalence of the Christian religion. Many of his prophecies have been fulfilled with such manifest precision, that some sceptical writers, with boldness equalled only by their folly, have asserted, in the face of demonstrative evidence to the contrary, that the predictions were written subsequently to the events which they describe. To the celebrated wisdom of Daniel a memorable testimony is given by the cotemporary prophet Ezekiel;* in whose predictions also the Supreme Being himself declares Daniel's extraordinary righteousness.† To these evidences is to be added the unequivocal attestation of our Saviour.‡

Hosea was coëval with Isaiah.§ His prophecies, which are couched in a style sententious and abrupt, and are attended with considerable obscurity, were addressed in part to Judah; but principally to Israel. Together with predictions relating to those kingdoms, he intermingles others respecting the Messiah. His book has the express sanction of the New Testament. ‖

Joel was probably cotemporary with Hosea: but the exact time in which he lived is not ascertained. His prophecies, which are animated with the most poetical descriptions, were addressed to the kingdom of Judah; and foretel, together with the invasion of the land of Judah by the Chaldeans, and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the glories of the Christian dispensation. He is cited by the evangelical writers.¶

Amos also lived during the earlier part of Hosea's ministry.** His compositions, which are replete with boldness as well as elegance, chiefly relate to Israel; though he occasionally menaces Judah, and other contiguous nations, with Divine judgments. The happy reign of the Messiah is also announced. Amos is twice quoted by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles.††

The period in which Obadiah delivered his short prophecy, consisting of denunciations against the Edomites,

* Ezekiel, xxxviii. 3. † Ezek. xiv. 14. 19. 20. ‡ Matt. xxiv. 15. Mark, xiii. 14. § See Hos. i. 1. and Isaiah, i. 1. ‖ Matt. ii. 15. ix. xii. 7. Romans, ix. 25, 26. ¶ Acts, ii. 16. Romans, x. 13.
** Amos, i. 1. †† Acts, vii. 42, 43. xv. 15. 17.

and promises of future restoration to the Jews, is not known; but is assigned with probability to the early part of the Babylonian captivity. There is much beauty in his language. I do not know that a distinct and special reference to this single chapter has been observed in the New Testament.

The book of Jonah relates the prophetic commission given to him against Nineveh; his refusal to undertake it, his punishment and deliverance; the repentance of the Ninevites; the mortification of Jonah at having been charged with prophetic threatenings, the accomplishment of which was thus averted:* and the condescending expostulations of the Supreme Being with the angry prophet. Jonah appears to have lived in the reign of Jeroboam, the second of the name who was king of Israel, above eight hundred years before Christ.† His language is generally that of simple narrative. According to the typical nature of the Jewish dispensation, the miracle by which Jonah was punished was appointed to prefigure the time of the continuance of Christ in the grave: and is thus applied by Christ himself.‡

Micah lived just before the destruction of Samaria,§ and prophesied both against Israel and against Judah. Together with the captivity of those kingdoms, and the destruction of their Assyrian oppressors; he foretold the birth-place of the Messiah, and the exaltation of his dominion over the whole earth. His language is extremely energetic as well as beautiful. A reference to one of his prophecies, when it had been delivered above an hundred years, saved the life of Jeremiah.‖ In the New Testament his prophetic character is fully confirmed.¶

The time when Nahum lived is doubtful; but from a comparison of certain passages in his book it seems probable that he lived in the reign of Hezekiah. His pro-

* It is apparent from iv. 2. that the dread of experiencing such a mortification was the cause of his original reluctance to be the messenger employed. † 2 Kings, xiv. 25. ‡ Matt. xii. 39---41. xiv. 4. Luke, xi. 29. 30. § Micah. i. 1. ‖ Jerem. xxvi. 17---24. ¶ Matt. ii. 5, 6. John, vii. 42. Compare also Matt. x. 35, 36. with Micah, vii. 6.

phecy is a complete and regular poem, in the highest degree animated, glowing and sublime, denouncing the destruction of Nineveh. It is not clear that his prophecy is specifically quoted in the New Testament."*

Habakkuk was probably cotemporary with Jeremiah. He predicts the Chaldean invasion; but he refers to the redemption to be wrought at the appointed time for the people of God, when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, "as the waters cover the sea." The hymn with which his prophecy concludes is one of the most sublime and impasioned compositions in the whole compass of inspired poetry. The evangelical writers repeatedly quote the book of Habbakkuk.†

We learn from Zephaniah himself,‡ that he prophesied in the reign of Josiah king of Judah. He foretells in an impressive manner the punishment of his idolatrous countrymen, and of some of the neighbouring nations, together with the destruction of Nineveh: and concludes with consoling promises of the final restoration of the Jews under the Gospel covenant. I am not acquainted with any passage in the New Testament, in which he is specifically quoted.

The three remaining prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, flourished after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity. The two former were also cotemporaries; and prophesied during the time when the Jews were rebuilding the city of Jerusalem. Haggai, in language commonly unornamented, but always impressive, and occasionally sublime, reproves his countrymen for their eagerness to decorate their own habitations instead of exerting themselves in the re-edification of the Temple; excites them in the name of the Almighty to restore the sacred edifice; and solemnly assures them that this latter house should be crowned with glory greater than the glory of the former, and be filled with the presence of the Messiah, the Desire of all Nations. Haggai is quoted by St. Paul in the epistle to the Hebrews.§

* Romans, x. 15. is a reference either to Isaiah, 52. 7. or to Nahum, i. 15. or to both passages.

† Acts, xiii, 41. Romans, i. 17. Gal. iii. 2. Heb. x. 37, 38.

‡ Zephaniah, i. 1. § Heb. ii. 26.

Zechariah co-operated with Haggai* in exhorting the Jews to rebuild their Temple. Under various emblems and figurative representations he predicts the future prosperity of his countrymen; and their union with Gentile nations under the blessed government of Christ. In style he so nearly resembles Jeremiah, that the Jews have been accustomed to speak of the spirit of Jeremiah as resting on him. Some of the concluding chapters of his book appear to differ in style from the rest; and a passage from one of them is quoted by the evangelists,† in the present copies of our Bible, as the prophecy of Jeremiah. Zechariah is repeatedly cited in other parts of the new Testament.‡

Malachi, who appears to have lived about four hundred years before Christ,§ was the last of the Jewish prophets. He reprehends both the priests and the people for their disregard of God and his laws: foretells punishments to the wicked, and recompence to the righteous; and announces the coming of the Messiah, "the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings;" and of his forerunner John the Baptist, to preach repentance in the spirit and power of Elijah. He closes the sacred volume with a solemn command faithfully to observe the law of Moses until the manifestation of the promised Redeemer. The writers of the New Testament afford the clearest attestations to the prophetic character of Malachi.‖

* Ezra describes the effect produced by the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah, Ezra v. 1. vi. 14.

† Matt. xxvii. 9. The word Jeremiah may have been originally inserted instead of Zechariah by the error of a transcriber: or, as some learned men suppose, the roll containing these concluding chapters may sometimes have been attached by mistake to the book of Jeremiah. Either of these circumstances was the more likely to happen, if the Jews were already accustomed in the days of Christ to speak of the spirit of Jeremiah as resting on Zechariah.

‡ Matt. xxi. 4, 5. xxvi. 31. Mark xiv. 27. John xii. 15. xix. 37. Rev. i. 7.

§ He was evidently subsequent to Haggai and Zechariah: for he speaks of the Temple as rebuilt and the sacrifices as performing.

‖ Matt. xi. 10—14. xvii. 10—12. Mark i. 2 ix. 12. Luke i. 16, 17. vii. 27. xvi. 16 Romans ix. 13. It is to be observed, that the Jews expected Elijah the Tishbite to be actually restored to life, and sent to prepare the way for the Messiah. In that sense John the Baptist denied that he was Elias; John i. 21.

To the particular proofs which have been produced to shew the authenticity and inspiration of the several books of the Old Testament, it remains to subjoin the general and decisive testimony given by the inspired apostles of Christ, and by Christ himself, to the whole sacred volume of the Jews : a testimony delivered from an infallible source, and accompanied with no exception. In the first place let it be duly considered, that whenever our Saviour and his disciples speak of the Scriptures in general, they speak of them with the utmost reverence as the word of God : and whenever they appeal to any part of the Scriptures, they make the appeal in a manner which recognizes the authority of the whole. In the next place, let the import of the following evidence be weighed :—" From a child," saith St. Paul to his disciple Timothy, " thou hast known " the Holy Scriptures," (the Jewish Scriptures, the only Scriptures existing when Timothy was a child,) " which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, " through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scrip- " ture is given by inspiration of God "—"* The Scrip- " ture," saith our Saviour, " cannot be broken."† And at another time ; " all things must be fulfilled which " were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, " and in the Psalms, concerning me."‡ When we recollect that our Saviour thus cites the Scriptures conformably to the three divisions which contained, according to the distribution established among the Jews, all the books of the Old Testament ; we shall perceive that his sanction comprehended every portion of the sacred volume.

That the Scriptures had been preserved in their primitive integrity to the time of our Saviour, was a part of the original proposition so be established. On that head I might with propriety refer to the acknowledged veneration with which the Jews regarded their sacred books ; to the extreme care which is known to have been bestowed in transcribing them ; and to the impossibility that, when the Scriptures were in the hands of such numbers not only in Judea, but in many other

* 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16 † John, x. 35. ‡ Luke xxiv. 44.

countries, any material corruption could have taken place, either by negligence or design, without having been speedily detected. But to enlarge on these and other collateral topics is wholly needless. The unqualified sanction which was bestowed, as has recently been shewn by our Saviour on every part of the Old Testament completely proves its purity. Had it been corrupted, he would not have failed to enumerate, among the crimes with which he charged the Jews, the fraudulent or careless deterioration of the written word of God: nor would he have unreservedly appealed to the Scriptures, or have permitted his inspired apostles thus to appeal to them after his ascension, as records of Divine and universal authority.

But though the Jewish Scriptures were pure in the days of our Saviour, have they descended in their original integrity through the lapse of seventeen centuries, many of them centuries of ignorance and darkness, to the present hour? This to a Christian is a very important question. It is a question which demands a conclusive answer: and it may receive, in few words, a most satisfactory reply. In the first place, the corruption of them would have been impracticable. For since during the whole of the period in question they have been universally in the hands both of Jews and of Christians in all parts of the world; and not only perused by all parties as a rule of faith, but produced and quoted as criterians of the truth in every religious discussion: the watchful jealousy of Jews against Christians, and of contending Christian sects against each other, would immediately have detected any material variation, whether introduced by inadvertance or by design. But, in the next place, the integrity of the Scriptures does not rest on speculative arguments. It is ascertained by indisputable facts. We are in possession of a Samaritan version of the Pentateuch made above two thousand years ago; which varies from the Hebrew original in very few cases, and those immaterial, and admitting an obvious explanation. We are in possession of a complete Greek version of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint version, from a tra-

dition that once prevailed respecting the number of persons employed in the translation : a version, the whole of which was confessedly made long before the birth of Christ, and thoroughly confirms the accordance of the original Hebrew copies from which it was rendered with those which we now retain.* Add to these facts, that nearly seven hundred Hebrew manuscripts of the scriptures dispersed in various parts of the world have been recently compared with each other by Dr. Kennicott and his assistants, and a very large additional number by De Rossi. The result of these very meritorious labours has demonstratively proved, that, although many verbal variations have found their way into particular manuscripts through the erroneous proceedings of transcribers ; and have thus created in detached passages incidental obscurities, which by means of these collations have been happily removed ; the integrity of our Hebrew text is indisputable.

Concerning the apocryphal books, as they are not of inspired authority, though unaccountably received as such, the prayer of Manasseh excepted, by the church of Rome, it is not necessary to enter into detail.† From the perusal of them, though human compositions, much religious instruction may be drawn ; particularly from the book of Ecclesiasticus. And the author of the first book of Maccabees exhibits many strong marks of historical knowledge and fidelity.

The statement of particulars contained in the present chapter strongly suggests the duty of gratitude to God, for having attested, by so many proofs, the Divine authority of the canonical books of the Old Testament, " which are able to makes us wise unto salvation through

* The Chaldee paraphrases, called Targums, of the Old Testament, which were made for the benefit of the Jews on their return from the Babylonian captivity, during which great numbers of them had adopted the Chaldee language, a dialect of their native tongue, and could not easily understand the original Scriptures (see Nehem. viii. 8.) confirm the integrity of our Hebrew text.

† A particular account of each of these books may be found in Gray's Key to the Old Testament.

faith which is in Christ Jesus:" and loudly calls upon us habitually and diligently to apply them, with a pious and humble heart, to the momentous purpose for which they have been bestowed.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

IF the enquiry pursued in the preceding chapter respecting the canonical Jewish Scriptures be a matter of high importance to Christians; a similar enquiry respecting the books of the New Testament is of still greater moment. For the Divine authority of the latter books is not only the ground, on which the most obvious proofs of the authenticity and inspiration of the former depend; but is the foundation of the whole fabric of Christain faith.

The most perspicuous method of conducting the present investigation will be to state, in the first place, the nature and purport of each of the books of the New Testament: and, in the second place, to lay before the reader a brief account of the concurring proofs which demonstrate that the books singly and collectively, were written by the persons whose names they severally bear, and under the superintending guidance of the Holy Spirit of God.

The writings comprised in the New Testament * may be divided into three classes; historical, epistolary, and

* The original word, Διαθηκη, signifies either a testament (that is to say, a will) or a covenant. It is expressly applied by St. Paul, 2 Cor. iii. 14. with the epithet "Old" to the Jewish Scriptures. From this circumstance, and from the repeated use of the term by Christ and his disciples as characteristic of the Christian dispensation, Matt. xxvi. 28. Hebrews, vii. 22. viii. 8. it has been assigned from a very early period of the church to the Christian Scriptures. The term "Covenant" whould however have been on the whole a more appropriate translation. The word "Testament," in its na-

prophetical. In all of them doctrinal truths of the utmost consequence are included: and in the historical and epistolary books prophecies are occasionally delivered. With this explanation the preceding division may be usefully made. The historical books are the four Gospels * and the Acts of the Apostles. The epistolary books are those to which the title of Epistles is always prefixed. Of the prophetical class there is only one book, that of the Apocalypse,† or Revelations.

The Gospels contain a recital of such leading particulars relating to the life and discourses of Jesus Christ, as appeared to the writers most essential to be recorded for the information and benefit of the Christian church. Of these Gospels there are four, written by four different persons, and according to internal marks, under different circumstances and at different periods.

The Gospel composed by Saint Matthew was confessedly written antecedently to any of the other three; though learned enquirors vary in their conclusions as to the precise date to be assigned to it. Some‡ have thought, on no slight grounds, that it was not composed until A. D. 61. At the same time considerable weight belongs to the arguments which carry back the date to within some few years of the death of our Saviour. The book evidently was composed primarily for the use of Jewish converts. The Christian authors for the second and many following centuries, in speaking of this Gospel, concur in affirming it to have been originally written in Hebrew. A Greek translation

tural meaning is not very applicable to the Jewish canon: but may be ascribed with pertinence to the collection of the sacred writings of the Apostles and Evangelists; as implying a book wherein the inheritance of the kingdom of Heaven is bequeathed and sealed to true Christians, as children and heirs of God, through the death of Jesus Christ; and the death of Jesus Christ as the testator is and applied to their recorded full advantage. See Hebrews, ix. 15—17.

* Gospel, a word of Saxon etymology, has precisely the same meaning as the Greek word Ευαγγελιον, good tidings.

† Αποκαλυψις, a revelation.

‡ See the subject discussed in Bishop Percy's Key to the New Testament; a manual of great utility.

however is acknowledged to have been speedily made; and, in consequence of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish state, soon to have been in more general use than the original. That every other part of the New Testament, the Epistle to the Hebrews excepted, was composed from the first in Greek is a fact universally admitted: and the assertion of some writers, who have maintained that epistle, as it stands in our Greek Testaments, to be only a version from the Hebrew, appears not to be supported by adequate proof. The Greek language was, in fact familiar to the Jews long before the time of our Saviour: and was incomparably superior to the Hebrew tongue as a veheicle of instruction to Gentile converts and to succeeding ages. Saint Matthew, from being a publican, or collector of taxes under the Roman jurisdiction, became one of the twelve apostles of Christ; and was an eye witness of almost all the transactions which he relates. It is uncertain in what countries he exercised his apostolical labours after the ascension of his master; and equally uncertain whether those labours were terminated by a natural death or by martyrdom.

The Gospel of Saint Mark was written by that Mark, whom St. Peter signalises by the affectionate appellation of son:* probably the same person with "John surnamed Mark," who is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, and the epistles of St. Paul.† Though not actually an apostle himself, he was, to say the least, a companion and intimate friend of St. Peter. His qualifications therefore to record with knowledge and fidelity the transactions related in his Gospel cannot be doubted. From the care with which in several instances he explains Oriental circumstances and Jewish customs, it is evident that he composed his book with an especial regard to the instruction of Gentile converts. And the concurrent voice of antiquity affirms that it was drawn up at Rome for the use of the Christians of that part of the world; and it was written from the

* 1 Pet. v. 13. † Acts xii. 12. 25. xv. 39. Col. iv. 10. 2 Tim. iv. 11. Philem. 24.

express information of St. Peter, if it were not even penned, as some early writers assert, under the actual superintendence of that Apostle. St. Mark preserves several particulars respecting our Saviour which St. Matthew had omitted: and passes over others recorded by t at evangelist, as not immediately calculated to make a strong impression on a heathen disciple, unaccostomed to the study of the Jewish Scriptures. His own impartiality (and, if St. Peter revised his Gospel, the contrite humility of that righteous man) is pointedly shewn by his relating fully in detail the failings of St. Peter, and the aggravating circumstances which attended his denial of Jesus Christ; and by his forbearing to record the consoling tokens of favour bestowed on the penitent, apostle, by his forgiving Lord after his resurrection. St. Mark afterwards appears to have preached the Gospel in Egypt; and to have died at Alexandria, probably by a natural death.

Saint Luke, the frequent companion of St. Paul,* professes to have composed his Gospel from the information of eye-witnesses of the facts which he describes. He is allowed to be the person styled by St. Paul "the "brother, whose praise is in the Gospel throughout all the churches."† He records many particulars unnoticed by his predecessors: and by his large explanations of Jewish usages shews that he wrote at at period, when a great accession of Gentiles had augmented the Christian church. It seems probable that he published his Gospel in Greece. The place, time and manner of his death are not ascertained.

The Gospel of Saint John, the peculiarly favoured apostle of Christ, is universally admitted to have been composed subsequently to the other three.‡ It was written in Asia, and with an especial design to refute

* See Col. iv. 14. Philemon 24. and various passages, in the Acts of the Apostles, which proves St. Luke to have been with St. Paul in his travels through many different countries.

† 2. Cor. viii. 18.

‡ Bishop Percy (in his Key to the New Testament, p. 81.) seems to demonstrate that it was written in A. D. 69.

certain heretical opinions concerning the nature of Christ; with which the senseless and irreligious philosophy of the Gnostics had by that time infected the Christian world. In another respect also it is particularly interesting: as by reciting at length some most impressive discourses of our Saviour when in private with his twelve disciples, it seems to render us more familiarly acquainted with his holiness, with his love for his followers and for mankind, and with the other virtues of his heart. Saint John, who according to the testimony of antiquity, had perused, as indeed we might conclude without any specific evidence, the three preceding Gospels, confirms them by his tacit assent; and confines himself chiefly to circumstances which they had not mentioned, or which, if mentioned by them, furnished him with an opportunity of subjoining an important addition. Like his predecessors, he explains Jewish rites and occurrences for the information of his Gentile readers. St. John resided during the latter part of his life at Ephesus; having the episcopal superintendence of that city, and of others in the neighbouring part of Asia Minor: and died there in a very advanced age.

The Acts of the Apostles were confessedly written by St. Luke: and probably soon after the expiration of that residence of Saint Paul at Rome during two years, with an account of which the history, comprehending a period of about thirty years after the ascension of Christ, terminates. After reciting the early augmentation of the Christian church at Jerusalem in consequence of the promised descent of the Holy Ghost on the apostles: and the establishment of the right of the Gentiles to all the privileges of the Gospel covenant, demonstrated by the mission of St. Peter to Cornelius, and its attendant circumstances; St. Luke restricts his narration almost exclusively to the labours of St. Paul, whose violence against the Christians during the persecution which began with the death of Stephen, together with the miraculous conversion of the enemy into the preacher of Christianity, he had previously recorded. After mentioning the preaching of St. Paul

for a year at Antioch in Syria, St. Luke records three distinct and very extensive journies of the great apostle of the Gentiles. The first, begun from Antioch, in obedience to the express direction of the Holy Ghost, about A. D. 45. and occupying the space of two years, included the Isle of Cyprus, Pampylia Pisidia, and Lycaonia. The second, after an interval in which Paul had been sent with Barnabas to Jerusalem to consult the other apostles respecting the asserted obligation of the Gentile converts to receive the Mosaic law, was undertaken from Antioch also about A. D. 50; and comprehended Cicilia, Lycaonia, Phrygia Galatia, Mysia, Macedonia, Athens, Corinth, in which city he resided eighteen months, and Ephesus. He reached Antioch after an absence of three years. After a short stay there, he commenced his third journey, the last before his imprisonment at Rome; revisiting Phrygia, Galatia, Ephesus, (in which city he continued during two years,) Troas,† Macedonia, Corinth: and returning by the way of Macedonia, Troas, Assos, Mitylene, Miletus, whence, he sailed to Tyre, and proceeded to Jerusalem, and arrived there at the feast of Pentecost, A. D. 58. St. Luke was his faithful associate in many parts of these laborious and dangerous expeditions by sea and land.†

To the genuineness, the authenticy, and the inspiration of these historical books the Christian writers, who lived at and near the period of their publication, bear decisive testimony. Barnabas, one of the companions of St. Paul,‡ in a single epistle yet remaining, quotes the Gospel of St. Matthew, and quotes it as sacred scripture.§ Clement of Rome, another of the companions of the same apostle ‖ quotes it with the highest respect-

* 2 Cor. ii. 12, 13. † Acts, xvi. 11. xx. 5. &c. &c.

‡ See Acts, xi. to xv. inclusively.

§ The testimonies of the Fathers to the several books of the New Testament are recited at length by Dr. Lardner: and from his work a judicious compendium of the principal attestations is given in Dr. Paley's View of the Evidences of Christianity.

‖ Phil. iv. 3.

and also the Gospel of St. Luke. Hermas, incontestably a writer of the earliest Christian antiquity, and usually supposed to be the Hermas mentioned by St. Paul, manifestly alludes to the two Gospels already named, and also to that of St. John ; and probably to the Acts of the Apostles. Ignatius, who became bishop of Antioch, about thirty-seven years after the ascension of Christ repeatedly alludes to the Gospels of Matthew and John. Polycarp, who had conversed with many persons who had seen our Saviour, had himself been instructed by the Apostles, and was by them appointed bishop of Smyrna, alludes to the Gospel of St. Matthew and perhaps to that of St. Luke, and certainly to the Acts, in a letter yet extant ; which, though very short, contains nearly forty clear allusions to the books of the New Testament, particularly to the writings of St. Paul. Papias, who was a hearer of St. John, and the companion of Polycarp, speaking of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark, mentions them in a manner which shews that their genuineness was a fact which had long been recognised. Let it be observed that all the witnesses already quoted had lived and conversed with some of the apostles : and that by one or more of them attestation is thus given to each of the five historical books of the New Testament. Justin Martyr, about twenty years after Papias, quotes all the four Gospels and the Acts ; and refers to them as books of Holy Scripture. Of the writings of Hegesippus, who lived about thirty years afterwards, some fragments are preserved ; and in them he quotes the Gospel of St. Matthew, and apparently refers to the other Gospels and the Acts. An epistle, of the same period, and still extant, addressed to the churches of Asia and Phrygia by the Gallican churches of Vienne and Lyons, whose bishop Pothinus, then ninety years old, had lived in the days of St. John, refers distinctly to the Gospels of Luke and John, and to the Acts. Ireneus, successor of Pothinus and the disciple of Polycarp, who had been instructed by St. John, affirms in the most positive and distinct manner the genuineness and the Divine authority of the four Gospels and of the Acts. If it were necessary to continue the line of

testimony lower, Theophilus bishop of Antioch, and the cotemporary of Irenæus; Clement of Alexandria, who flourished sixteen years afterwards, (A. D. 190;) Tertullian of Carthage, who followed Clement (A. D. 200;) Origen of Alexandria, (A. D. 230,) and Eusebius of Cæsarea, (A. D. 315, with numerous intermediate writers of inferior note, might be produced as corroborating in their different countries these fundamental truths.*

The order of the proposed examination of the books of the New Testament now leads us to the Epistles. Of these Epistles, the greater number was addressed to particular churches or to particular persons. Those which are not of that description are denominated Catholic, or universal. Of the former Epistles fourteen were written by St. Paul. He was peculiarly the apostle of the Gentiles. He began in no long period after his conversion to extend his labours into countries far distant from Judea; which, until the destruction of Jerusalem, was the principal scene of the ministry of the apostles. And though it was regularly his practice, whithersoever he came, to address himself in the first instance to the Jews; their incredulity and opposition commonly was such as soon to compel him to direct his endeavours almost exclusively to the Gentiles. It not unfrequently happened that the churches, which were thus planted in different parts of Europe and Asia by the apostle, were distracted after his departure by novel teachers, who came among them; or were perplexed by religious doubts arising from local circumstances and events. For the removal of these difficulties they occasionally consulted their original instructor.—Many of the Epistles, or letters, of St. Paul were written in reply to letters of this nature, which he had received from particular churches: or were addressed by him spontaneously to some particular church in consequence of the information which he had received

* It ought to be recollected that all the testimonies which have been produced in this paragraph from the days of the apostles to Eusebius are independent of each other, as well as that the persons, who thus concur in one consistent account lived in widely separated regions.

respecting the animosities, the culpable practices, or the erroneous doctrines which prevailed there. They were in many cases dispatched by special messengers of distinguished character in the Christian ministry; who were commissioned by Saint Paul to rectify what was amiss in conjunction with the elders of the church. In such a correspondence we must expect to meet with some obscurities, arising from brief references to prejudices and opinions then afloat, with which we are imperfectly acquainted, and allusions to local incidents to us wholly unknown. The principal cause however which troubled the newly established churches is evident. It was the arrival of Jewish Christians jealous for the honour of the Mosaic law: and peremptory in requiring the converted Gentiles to submit to all the institutions of that law in addition to the Gospel. The Jewish people, separated by the Divine command and by their peculiar rites and usages from the rest of mankind; elated by the signal marks of favour conferred upon them by the Supreme Being, which they began to regard as proofs of their own pre-eminent merit; and proudly unwilling to discern that their fore-fathers had been entrusted with the oracles of God, and distinguished by a special dispensation, for the benefit, not merely of themselves and their descendants, but of the whole human race; regarded all other nations with contempt and abhorrence as impure, profane, and outcasts from the mercy of Heaven. Though so many of the ancient prophets had announced that the Messiah should bring salvation to all the inhabitants of the earth; though Simeon had proclaimed him, when presented in the Temple, "a light to lighten the Gentiles:"* though our Saviour himself whose personal mission was confined to "the lost sheep of the House of Israel,"† had repeatedly intimated that the Gentiles were a part of his flock; and had charged the disciples, in his last instructions, to "go and baptize all nations. and preach the Gospel to every creature:"‡ the very apostles, no less than their immediate associates, continued for some time after the

* Luke, i. 32. † Matt. xv. 24. ‡ Matt. xxviii. 19. Mark, xvi. 15.

ascension of Christ, under the influence of the prepossessions which governed their countrymen. When St. Peter, in obedience to the special command of God, visited the Gentile Cornelius; he unequivocally declared that without that command he should not have thought himself authorised to enter into the centurion's house.* When, on the preaching of Peter, "the Holy Ghost "fell on all them which heard the word: they of the "circumcision, which believed, were astonished, as ma- "ny as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles "also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost."† On St. Peter's return to Jerusalem, he was strictly reprehended by the apostles, who had heard an indistinct account of his journey to Cæsarea, for having associated and eaten with Gentiles ‡ And when in his own vindication he recounted the events which had preceded and those which had attended his mission to Cornelius; they exclaimed with astonishment: "then hath God also to "the Gentiles granted repentance unto life!"§ They however, being filled with the Christian spirit of universal benevolence, "glorified God"‖ for his extension of his mercy in Christ to all mankind. The usual temper of Jewish converts was very different. They received the doctrine with extreme repugnance; and when they could no longer withstand it, endeavoured to uphold the Mosaic law in its primitive eminence, by contending that although the Gentiles were indeed admissible into the Christian covenant, the law of Moses must be also accepted and punctually obeyed by them as an indispensable condition of their Salvation. In almost every place where a church was settled by Saint Paul, he was followed, as soon as his absence furnished the opportunity, by teachers of this description: men who, partly from an ardent desire to establish their favourite tenet, partly from interested views, and an ambitious eagerness for distinction, vilified and traduced the character of the apostle, representing him as unacquainted with the essentials of Christianity, the ignorant teacher of an im-

* Acts, x. 28, 29. † Acts, x. 44, 45.
‡ Acts, xi. 18. § Acts. xi. 2. ‖ Ibid.

perfect Gospel. When St. Paul, by virtue of his divine commission, proclaimed the total abolition of the ceremonial law, as to Jews as well as Gentiles: and loudly called on his converts of the latter class to stand fast in the liberty with which Christ had made them free; the indignation of the Judaizing teachers encreased to inveterate hatred against him; and displayed itself in every possible shape.*

The first of the Epistles according to the series in which they are disposed in our Bibles; a series regulated by attention to the supposed rank of the churches or individuals addressed rather than to accuracy of chronological arrangement, is that of St. Paul to the Romans. To the city of Rome Christianity had been conveyed not by any man of apostolical authority; but probably by converts drawn by their own private concerns from distant countries to the capital of the empire. But however introduced, it had made a rapid and efficacious progress. Of the celebrity of the Roman church St. Paul speaks in this Epistle,† which he wrote from Corinth, and as appears from a comparison of different circumstances, A. D. 58, to confirm the Roman converts in the true faith; and particularly to guard them against

* From the Acts of the Apostles and the writings of St. Paul it may be collected, that the doctrine of the admissibility of the Gentiles to an equal participation with the Jews of the privileges of the Gospel covenant, was one of the circumstances which most powerfully exasperated the unconverted Jews against Christianity and against St. Paul. Thus, when in making his defence at Jerusalem before the people (Acts, xxi.) he recounted the miraculous manner of his conversion to faith in Christ, the Jews listened to him with calmness. But when he added that the Lord said unto him, "Depart; for I will send thee far hence "unto the Gentiles;" at that word they instantly broke forth into uproar, cast off their clothes, threw dust into the air, cried out "away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit "that he should live:" and, had it not been for the intervention of the Roman officer and his band of soldiers, would have torn the apostle to pieces.

† Rom. i. 8.

errors of Judaizing instructors, and to place the Gentile disciple on a level in every particular with his Jewish brethren. Saint Paul demonstrates at great length, that the Jews and the Gentiles were equally in want of a Redeemer: alike exposed to the wrath of God; the latter by their grievous sins against their natural conscience; the former by their violation of the Mosaic convenant, and by the very nature of that covenant itself; which, promising justification only to sinless obedience, was inefficacious to save transgressors, and referred by its types to the perfect atonement of Christ. At the same time he completely vindicates the wisdom and the goodness of the Supreme Being against objections which might be occasioned by this account of the imperfection of the Mosaic law: and proves that from the days of Abraham the salvation of the Gentiles through faith in Christ was predetermined and foretold. He testifies very warm affection for his unbelieving countrymen the Jews; and predicts their final conversion and restoration. He interweaves among his doctrinal instructions many practical lessons of piety, and morality: inculcates the duty of conscientious obedience to lawful magistrates; and earnestly exhorts all the members of the church, Jews and Gentiles, to unity and brotherly love.

St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, great numbers of whom he had converted during a residence of eighteen months in their city, appears from internal marks to have been written from Ephesus, A. D. 56, about three years after he had left Corinth. The apostle vindicates his own character against the calumnies of Judaizing teachers; and, after praising the Corinthians of some accounts, severely reproves them for various instances of misconduct. He then proceeds to answer certain questions respecting marriage, the use of meats offered to idols, and other points concerning which the Corinthian church had consulted him by letter: censures the gross irreverence manifested in their mode of celebrating the Lord's supper: explains the diversity of spiritual gifts bestowed by the Holy Ghost: exhorts to unity and charity: and delivers a most im-

pressive lesson on the resurrection of the dead, a truth which by some was allegorized or denied.

About a year afterwards St. Paul, then in Macedonia, having received from Titus, the bearer of the preceding epistle, an account of the respectful attention with which the injunctions contained in it had been obeyed at Corinth, and of the warm attachment of the great body of the church to the apostle, addresses a second letter to the Corinthians. Among other points he enlarges in the strongest terms on the joy which he derived from this intelligence, and on his ardent affection for his repentant converts: vindicates himself from the charge of inconsistency and fickleness, on account of not having yet fulfilled his known purpose of visiting them again: dilates on the glorious office of a minister of Christ: refuts the malignant imputations of his Judaizing opponents; and zealously excites the Corinthian church to godliness, to purity of life, and to liberality in contributing to the relief of the distressed Christians in Judea.

Galatia was a country of Asia Minor. St. Paul appears, from the history in the acts, to have preached there A. D. 51, and again, A. D. 53.† The Epistle was probably written in the interval between these two visits; as he speaks at the commencement of his letter as though he had recently been among them,‡ yet does not intimate in any part of it that he had instructed them twice. It was evidently occasioned by the information which had reached St. Paul of the success with which Judaizing teachers had laboured to subvert his own credit with the Galatian converts, and to bring them into subjection to the Mosaic law. He therefore establishes in the first place his own special appointment from Christ to the office of an apostle, and to a perfect equality in rank and authority with the original apostles. He then proceeds to shew that the Mosaic law was intended to be of temporary obligation, and to cease when it had performed its office of preparing the way for the coming of the Messiah: that it was thenceforth,

* Acts xviii. 11. † Gal. i. 6.

as to its ceremonial rites and ordinances, totally abolished :* and that to look to it for salvation was in effect to renounce all reliance on redemption through Jesus Christ. He concludes with various pertinent and practical admonitions.

Ephesus, a city of Ionia, was the capital of the whole region denominated under the Roman government, the proconsular Asia. St. Paul had estabished a Christian church there partly in the year A. D. 53 ; and partly in a subsequent residence of two years beginning A. D. 54. He wrote this Epistle during his first imprisonment † at Rome, and probably about A. D. 61. It was occasioned by the intelligence which the apostle had received concerning the state of the Ephesian Church.‡ In the former part of the letter he effectionately exhorts the Ephesians to stedfastness in the genuine doctrines of the Gospel, and enlarges on the free mercy of God as extended to the Gentiles : intimating that his zeal in upholding the Christian privileges of the Gentile converts had been the cause of his present imprisonment.§ In the latter part he delivers many practical injunctions ; and points out the moral duties peculiarly incumbent on individuals in consequence of their different relative situations.

Phillippi, a city of Macedonia, was visited by St. Paul, A. D. 51, and at least once afterwards. His Christian converts there, who had already given a strong proof of their faithful regard for him,|| hearing of his imprisonment at Rome, sent one of their number Epaphroditus, to supply his pecuniary wants, and to enquire concerning his welfare. By his hands St. Paul returned this Epistle, which appears to have been written¶ after a residence of some length at Rome, and probably about A. D 62, towards the close of his imprisonment.** It abounds in expressions of affection for the Philippians ; and in doctrinal and practical exhor-

* Gal. iii. 4. † Ephes. iv. 1. vi. 20.
‡ Ephes. i. 15. § Ephes. iii. 1. See Acts, xxii. 21. &c
|| Philipp. iv. 15, 16. ¶ Philipp. ii. 25. vi. 18.
** Philipp. i. 12—17 ii. 23, 24.

tations, similar in several respects to those contained in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Colosse was a large city of Phrygia in Asia Minor, which has been thought not to have been visited by St. Paul himself;* but to have received the Gospel through the preaching of his "dear fellow-servant Epaphras."† In that case it might probably be to confirm by the sanction of his own apostolical authority the doctrine preached by Epaphras,‡ that St. Paul addressed his Epistle to the Colossians. Yet the known fact of St. Paul having already visited Phrygia twice, and having in the latter journey gone over all the country in order, strengthening the disciples,§ concurs with the tenor of the Epistle itself, in which affection and authority are happily blended, to confirm the supposition, that St. Paul had originally founded the church at Colosse; and that Epaphras had afterwards laboured with fidelity and diligence for its edification. The epistle was written during the apostle's imprisonment at Rome.‖ And the striking resemblance which in many passages it bears both in sentiment and language to the Epistle to the Ephesians, affords a very strong presumption that the one epistle was composed before the train of thought suggested by the other had quitted the mind of the writer. They appear also to have been sent by the same messenger.¶

* Coloss. ii. 1. † Col. i. 7. and see iv. 12, 13.

‡ Epaphras, who was himself a Colossian, and was now at Rome, Coloss. iv. 12, 13, had probably been sent by the church at Colosse for a purpose similar to that for which Epaphroditus had been dispatched by the Philippians. We find afterwards, Philem. 23, that he was imprisoned as well as St. Paul: and we cannot doubt that it was for the same cause, the preaching of the Gospel of Christ to the Gentiles.

§ Acts xvi. 6. xviii. 23. ‖ Coloss. iv. 3. 18.

¶ Tychicus—Eph. vi. 21, 22. Coloss. iv. 7.—9. Onesimus, as being of Colosse, is joined with Tychicus as a messenger to that city.

Thessalonica, the chief city of Macedonia, had been visited A. D. 51, by St. Paul; who, being driven away after a short residence by a persecution raised by the Jews,* had soon afterwards sent Timothy thither† again from Athens, to establish the church. Timothy returned to St. Paul at Corinth ;‡ from which place, probably A. D. 52, that apostle addressed his first Epistle to the Thessalonians. Among other topics which he introduces, he thanks God for the Christian attainments and conduct of the Thessalonian converts, notwithstanding the opposition of those among them who were enemies to the Gospel: dwells on his own affection for them: and exhorts them not to faint under persecution, and to abound more and more in Christian virtues, especially in purity: intimates that to despise his admonitions is to despise God, by whose inspiration he speaks: warns them against immoderate sorrow for the dead; encourages them with the prospect of the resurrection; and expatiates on the suddenness of the coming of Christ.

The exhortations of Saint Paul to be at all times prepared for the tribunal of Christ appear to have been in part misunderstood by the Thessalonians; and to have impressed them with the opinion that the dissolution of the world, and the day of judgment were at hand. To correct this misapprehension seems to have been the leading object of the apostle in his second letter; which was probably written within some few months after the former. He instructs them that before the arrival of that awful period an apostasy should take place in the church of Christ, under the influence of an hostile potentate figuratively denominated the "man of "sin," "the son of perdition;" whom the apostle describes as exalting himself against the Divine jurisdiction, and as seating himself in the Temple of God, and usurping the power of God: terms which clearly denote an ecclesiastical power assuming to itself a pre-eminence over the Christian church, and a right to supersede and abrogate the laws of the Gospel. St. Paul refers the Thessalonians to the information which,

* Acts xvii. † 1 Thess. iii. 1, 2. ‡ Acts xviii. 5.

when present, he had communicated to them respecting this subject: and concludes according to his general custom with some practical admonitions.

Timothy, the disciple and companion of St. Paul, had been left at Ephesus with episcopal authority to quiet the disorders, and rectify the abuses, prevalent in the church of that city.* To instruct and animate him in the execution of this office was the main purpose of the first Epistle which St. Paul addressed to him. It contains many directions concerning the administration of divine worship, the government of the church, and the qualifications of bishops and other ministers of the Gospel: predicts the rise and success of apostate teachers; and solemnly calls on Timothy to be faithful in the discharge of his duty. The epistle was probably written about A. D. 64.†

St. Paul, when he wrote his second Epistle to Timothy, was evidently a prisoner at Rome.‡ This imprisonment appears from various circumstances not to have been that which is recorded in the conclusion of the Acts; but a second, which he underwent according to the concurrent voice of the early Christian writers before his martyrdom under Nero. The date, therefore, of the present epistle was probably A. D. 65. Whether Timothy was still at Ephesus is not certain: but he appears from some passages in the epistle to have been, if not there, in the neighbouring parts of Asia. The topics noticed in this epistle are of the same nature with some of those discussed in the former; and the exhortations to Timothy are equally solemn and affectionate. Towards the conclusion of it St. Paul speaks with triumphant joy of his own approaching dissolution, and of the prospect of his eternal reward.

Titus was a Greek, converted early by St. Paul;§

* 1 Tim. i. 3.

† For the elucidation of the controverted date of these two epistles to Timothy see Dr. Paley's Horæ Paulinæ, p. 323, and Bishop Pretyman's Elements of Christian Theology, vol. ii. p. 420, &c.

‡ 2 Tim. i. 8. 16, 17. § Gal. ii. 1—3. Titus, i. 35.

who had now left him in Crete to superintend the churches with episcopal power. Neither the date of the epistle, nor the place whence it was written is ascertained; but it seems not improbable that it was written from Greece, and about A. D. 64. The present office of Titus resembled that of Timothy at Ephesus. Hence many of the directions in the Epistle to Titus are similar to those contained in the first Epistle to Timothy. The Jewish converts among the Cretans are mentioned by St. Paul with particular censure.

Philemon, to whom St. Paul, who converted him to the Christian faith,* has addressed an epistle, was an inhabitant of Colosse.† His servant Onesimus had run away‡ from him to Rome: and had been converted by St. Paul, then a prisoner there. St. Paul sent him back to Colosse as the bearer in conjunction with Tychicus,§ of a public epistle to the church in that city; and charged individually with a private letter to his master, written with force, yet with singular delicacy, and admirably calculated to conciliate forgivness for Onesimus.

It has been doubted both in ancient and in modern times whether the Epistle to the Hebrews was written by St. Paul. This epistle has been attributed successively to the companions of the apostle, St. Luke, Barnabas, and Clement. But the weight of early testimony is in favour of the received opinion, which ascribes it to the apostle himself. And that opinion is confirmed by internal evidence furnished by the letter. It was written as the concluding words demonstrate, from Italy; and, as various passages which speak of the service of the Jewish temple as still performing‖ evince, before the destruction of Jerusalem. The writer describes

* Philem. 19.

† For Onesimus, his servant, was, Col. vi. 9. and so was Archippus, Col. iv. 17. whom St. Paul joins in the beginning of his letter with Philemon.

‡ That Onesimus had robbed Philemon has been asserted on the authority of ver. 18. which by no means bears out such a conclusion.

§ Col. iv. 7—9. ‖ Heb. viii. 4. ix. 25. x. 11. xiii. 10.

himself as having been in bonds* for the cause of the Gospel: a circumstance which renders it probable that the date of the epistle was about A. D. 63, after St. Paul was released from his first imprisonment at Rome. It was addressed to the Jewish converts of Palestine, denominated Hebrews in contradiction† to the Jews of Greece and other regions. Residing in the very country which had been the scene chosen for the establishment of the Mosaic ritual, and surrounded by an hostile multitude of unconverted Jews; the Christian disciples of that race were under peculiar temptations, if not to apostatise from the faith of Christ, yet to debase it by additions borrowed from Judaism. St. Paul therefore opens his epistle with describing in the strongest and most sublime expressions the Divine nature and transcendent dignity of Jesus, the Son of God. He then enlarges on the guilt of refusing to believe in him and to obey him; enforces and illustrates by various arguments peculiarly adapted to have weight with the Jews, the superiority of the unchangeable priesthood and complete atonement of Christ over the temporary ineffectual and now superseded Levitical institutions. By the example of the ancient patriarchs and prophets, he encourages the Hebrews to perseverance in faith patience and constancy under the persecutions to which they were exposed.

St. James, who addresses his epistle "to the twelve "tribes which were scattered abroad," was one of the twelve apostles. He is denominated by St. Mark, "James the Less,"‡ to distinguish him from the other apostle James, the brother of St. John; and was, as the Scripture informs us, "the brother" (a Jewish appellation for any near kinsman) "of Christ."§ He seems

* Heb. x. 34. † Acts vi. 1. ‡ Mark xv. 40.

§ Matt. xiii. 55 Mark vi. 3. St. Paul speaks, Gal. i. xix. of "the apostle James, the Lord's brother." There is no reason to suppose that the other James was related to our Saviour. James the Less is thought by some, but apparently without reason, to have been the son of Joseph by a former wife antecedently to his marriage with the Virgin Mary. But as Alpheus, the father

to have resided constantly at Jerusalem, and to have been a person of eminent distinction among the apostles.* According to the account of Eusebius, in his Ecclesiastical history, he was put to death in a tumult by the unbelieving Jews, A. D. 62; and is thought to have composed his epistle not long before. He strenuously exhorts his countrymen to stedfastness under persecution, and to holiness and humility; and severely reprehends the animosities, arrogance, luxury and vice prevalent among them, especially among the rich. He also dwells on the true nature of faith; and exerts himself with great earnestness in opposition to the doctrines of those persons, who misunderstanding the import of St. Paul's arguments respecting the necessity of faith to salvation, had inferred and taught that there was no necessity for good works.

St. Peter writes his first general epistle "to the "strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia;" countries in which he has said to have preached the Gospel in the latter part of his life. Some authors consider the "scattered "strangers" as implying exclusively the dispersed Jewish converts. And others conceive the terms to include the Gentile Christians, as being thinly spread among surrounding idolaters: and as abroad all Christians may with equal propriety be termed, in the subsequent words of the apostle, "strangers and pilgrims"† upon earth. The letter was written from "Babylon;"‡ under which name the apostle is generally supposed to mean Rome, so denominated by St. John in the Revelations. As there is no intimation in the Acts that St. Peter was at Rome antecedently to the release of St. Paul, A. D. 63,

of James, is deemed by learned enquires to have been the same person with Cleopas; and as the wife of Cleopas is styled the sister of the Virgin, (John, xix. 25.) and bore the same name with the mother of James, (Mark xv. 41.) this apostle appears to have been cousin-german to Christ.

* Acts xii. 17. (the other apostle James was already put to death by Herod, 2.) xv. 13. xxi. 18. 1 Cor. xv. 7. Gal. i. 19. ii. 9. 12.

† 1 Peter, ii. 11. ‡ 1 Peter, v. 13.

from his first imprisonment there; this epistle was probably not written prior to that year. It expatiates on the full atonement and glory of Christ: on the obligation of being ready to suffer for the Gospel; and on other Christian duties, general and particular, enforced by the consideration of the judgment to come.

The date of the second Epistle of St. Peter is fixed by his allusion to his * approaching martyrdom; which took place at Rome A. D. 67; and, as Christ had forewarned him;† by crucifixion. It was addressed to the same persons to whom the former had been written.‡ In this epistle he solemnly affirms, as standing on the brink of the grave, the truth of Christianity; and calls on the believers in Christ to advance by the grace of God from one virtue to another towards Christian perfection. He predicts the rise of heretical teachers, corrupt in their lives as well as in their doctrine, who should introduce the most detestable tenets, and even "deny "the Lord who bought them;" and should be punished, like the sinners of the antediluvian world, with the exemplary vengeance of Heaven. In reply to the scoffers of his time, he gives an awful description of the future destruction of the world by fire, and the final judgment of all mankind: and notices the perverse interpretations affixed to parts of the epistles of his "beloved "brother Paul," whose epistles he expressly affirms to be sacred Scriptures. He probably was the more solicitous to mention that apostle in terms of the highest and most affectionate praise: as knowing that in one instance of his own timidity and weakness had been justly reproved by St. Paul;§ and that the Judaizing Christians were desirous of falsely representing himself as favourable to the imposition of the Mosaic law on the Gentile converts.

Of the first Epistle of St. John the date is not ascertained, nor the place whence it was written. It contains no passage, which seems to imply that it was addressed otherwise than to Christians in general. The apostle, who begins by affirming his own knowledge as

* 2 Peter, i. 13, 14. † John, ii. 18, 19. ‡ 2 Peter, iii. 1.
§ Gal. ii. 11—16.

an eye-witness of the truth of the Gospel, asserts the pre-existence and incarnation of the Son of God, and other fundamental doctrines of Christianity, against the Gnostic and Cerinthian heresies which already prevailed. He likewise delivers various admonitions to the performance of Christian duties; and particularly to the maintenance of universal kindness and brotherly love, founded on gratitude for the Divine love manifested in our redemption.

The second Epistle of St. John inculcates the same doctrines as the former, and nearly in the same terms. From these circumstances it appears to have been written about the same time. It is not known who "the lady" was, to whom it is addressed.

Gaius, whose hospitality to ministers of the Gospel St. John applauds in his third Epistle, was not improbably the Gaius of Corinth, whom St. Paul styles his host, and that of the whole church:* but that point is uncertain. Nor is the date of the epistle known.

Jude, the author of the remaining general epistle, was the "Judas, not Iscariot," and the "Judas, son of Al-"pheus," mentioned in the Gospels. He was brother to James the Less, and nearly related to our Saviour. Nothing is recorded either of the scene of his ministerial labours, or of the time and manner of his death. His epistle was evidently written subsequently to the Epistles of St. Paul to Timothy,† and the second Epistle of St. Peter; the latter of which he closely copies, after having earnestly exhorted Christians to contend for the true faith as originally delivered to the saints.

The only book of the New Testament which remains to be considered, belongs to the prophetical class; and is denominated, from the nature of its contents, the Apocalypse, or Book of Revelations. It was written by St. John in the Isle of Patmos, to which he was banished in the reign, as Irenæus and other early writers assert, of Domitian. It contains, after a most sublime introductory vision, a description of the existing state of the

* Romans, xvi. 23. 1 Cor. i. 14.

† Compare Jude, 17. 19. with 1 Tim. iv. 1.—2 Tim. iii. 1.—2 Pet. iii. 3.

Christian churches in seven cities of Asia Minor, under the episcopal jurisdiction of St. John; and afterwards an emblematical series of prophetical Revelations, shadowing out the fortunes of the church of Christ from the times of the apostle to the day of judgment. The fulfilment of many of these prophecies has been indisputably proved: and the gradual accomplishment of the remainder will explain parts of the book which are yet obscured, and add new evidence to the truth of Christianity.

The testimonies borne by the earliest Christian writers to the Epistles and to the book of Revelations are not less satisfactory than those, which have been already produced in support of the Divine authority of the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles. The principal attestations afforded to the Epistles of St. Paul shall be mentioned in the first place. At the head of these attestations must be placed the noble evidence already cited as given to these Epistles by St. Peter, who unequivocally ranks them among the sacred Scriptures.* Clement of Rome, the companion of St. Paul, quotes passages from the Epistle to the Romans, the first Epistle to the Romans, the first Epistle to the Corinthians, and the Epistle to the Hebrews: mentioning in the second case St. Paul as the author; in the others, citing the passages without the name of the writer, according to the method of quoting Scripture prevalent among the early Christians. Ignatius quotes the Epistle to the Ephesians. Polycarp cites the same Epistle, and also that to the Philippians; and refers incidentally to fourteen or fifteen books of the New Testament, among which are ten of St. Paul's Epistles; calling them in general terms Holy Scriptures, and oracles of the Lord. The short Epistle to Philemon is in fact the only one, to which there is not a distinct reference in the scanty remains which have reached us of the works of the apostolical fathers; that is to say, of those Christian writers, who lived and conversed with some of the apostles. It is scarcely necessary to carry down the line of testimony further. It may however be added briefly, omitting

* 2 Peter, iii. 15. 16.

such writers as refer only to few of St. Paul's Epistles, that Justin Martyr alludes to seven of them: Theophilus of Antioch to eight; Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, and Cyprian, to all except that to Philemon, and to the Hebrews: Epiphanius and Augustine to all except that to the Hebrews: and Tertullian (who ascribes indeed the last mentioned Epistle to Barnabas, Origen, Dionysius of Alexandria, Eusebius, Athanasius, Jerome, and Chrysostom, to every one of the fourteen without exception.

With respect to the seven remaining Epistles, there are references in the brief writings of Clement of Rome and of Hermas to that of St. James, to the first and second of St. Peter, and to the first of St. John. Polycarp also and Irenæus refer to the second and fourth of these: Origen and Eusebius, not to mention other separate testimonies, to all the four. The second Epistle of St. John is noticed by Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Dionysius of Alexandria. The third is supposed to be noticed by Ignatius; and is expressly mentioned by Origen, Eusebius, Cyril, and others. The Epistle of Jude is quoted by Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Dionysius of Alexandria, and the succeeding fathers. Of the seven preceding Epistles, five, namely those of James, the second of St. Peter, the second and third of St. John, and that of Jude, were not acknowledged as sacred Scriptures by the Christian church so early as the remaining two. The temporary doubt respecting the Epistle of St. James was this: whether James, the first bishop of Jerusalem, its acknowledged author, was the same person with the apostle James the Less, or only his cotemporary.* The second and third Epistles of St. John, being addressed to private individuals, were for a time not generally known: and when known, there was, for a certain time, a doubt in the minds of some, whether one at least of them might not have been written by a presbyter of Ephesus of the same name

* The antiquity of the Epistle was undoubted; as it is found in the Syriac version, which was made within the first century: and made for the use of converted Jews, the very persons to whom the Epistle of St. James is addressed.

with the apostle. The epistle of Jude was rejected by many, as we learn from St. Jerome, in consequence of its containing a quotation from a prophecy (probably traditional) of Enoch. Perhaps the resemblance which this Epistle bears to the second Epistle of St. Peter might render that also suspected. All these doubts however were by due enquiry satisfactorily removed.

To the book of Revelations the attestations are equally decisive. By Justin Martyr it is ascribed to St John ; and also by Irenæus. The testimony of the latter writer has particular weight, as he relates that he had received an explanation of a passage in the Revelations from those who had conversed with St. John the author : in which declaration he probably alludes to his own instructor Polycarp, who had been the disciple of Saint John. Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, and many succeeding fathers concur in attributing the work to the same apostle. In some of the antient catalogues of the Scriptures this book was omitted : a circumstance which, when the early testimonies already recited are considered, cannot easily be attributed to any doubt having ever been entertained respecting its genuineness or authenticity ; but was probably owing to its being regarded as less adapted than the other Scriptures, from its mysterious nature, for general use in the churches.

In addition to the proofs which have been cited in the present chapter to substantiate the authenticity and Divine authority of the New Testament, the attention of the reader is requested to the following facts ; which Dr. Lardner and other learned enquirers have indisputably ascertained by testimonies deduced from the remaining works of the early Christian writers. The Scriptures were very soon collected into one distinct volume.* They were regularly distinguished by

* Ignatius, who was bishop of Antioch A. D. 73. uses language that implies this to have been the case in his time. See Paley's Evidences, v. i. (1st edit.) p. 283, 284. Quadratus and Irenæus are still more distinct. Melito, bishop of Sardis, A. D.

the terms "Holy," "Divine," and other similar appellations. They were publicly read and expounded in Christian assemblies. They were translated into various languages, and illustrated by harmonies and commentaries. They were generally appealed to as decisive by contending sects of Christians. They were regarded by the enemies of Christianity as the records of the religion, and attacked as such. The several books were arranged in regular catalogues. And no book was received into the sacred canon without ample enquiry into its title to admission: an enquiry rendered the more rigorous by the existence, though not, as it appears, until the second century,* of pretended Gospels and other apocryphal books, to which the reverse of each of the preceding propositions may be distinctly applied. "Besides our Gospels and the Acts of the "Apostles no Christian history, claiming to be written "by an apostle or apostolical man, is quoted within "three hundred years after the birth of Christ, by any "writer now extant or known; or, if quoted, is not quoted with marks of censure and rejection."† They were rejected because they had no evidence in their favour: and the canonical books were received, because the evidence in their favour was irresistible. It deserves to be noticed that the apocryphal books corroborate the credit of the real Scriptures. Their very existence indicated that real Scriptures, which they imitated, were publicly received. They frequently professed to be the works of men of distinguished character in the real Scriptures. They assumed the truth of the facts recorded in the real Scriptures; and contained no contradictions to those facts, but merely ventured to accumulate unauthorised additions.

With respect to the nature and the extent of inspiration as afforded to the writers of the New Testament, I would refer to the general remarks which have been

178. proves by and incidental expression that the volume of Christian Scriptures was then denominated the "New Testament." It was at first called "the Gospels and Apostles."

* Paley's Evid. vol. i. p. 373. † Paley's Evid. vol. i. p. 368.

made in a former chapter on the inspiration of the Jewish Scriptures. The arguments in the present chapter which have tended to establish the conclusion, that the writers of the New Testament were inspired, may fitly be closed with a brief statement of the evidence which the Scriptures themselves advance or suggest. In the first place then, let it then be considered whether it is not a thing in itself utterably improbable that the Supreme Being, after having ordained that the religious books of those who lived under the introductory Mosaic dispensation should be written by inspired penmen, should leave the Christian world to depend for the records of its religion on uninspired authority. In the next place, let it be remembered that Christ, in addition to his personal instructions antecedently to his crucifixion, and to those delivered in the forty days after his resurrection during which he continued with his disciples "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God,"* promised them "the Comforter," the Holy Spirit, "the Spirit of Truth," who should teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever Christ had said unto them; and should guide them into all truth, and abide with them for ever.† The aid of this heavenly Guide was assuredly not withheld from them, when they were engaged in delivering written instructions, whether in the form of Gospels or of Epistles, for the edification of the Christian church to the end of time. The very words of the promise, that it should abide with them for ever, contradict the supposition: and the more so, as we know that the full inspiration of the Holy Ghost was specially promised always to attend them on a lighter occasion, namely when they were to make their defence before magistrates ‡ Now five of the writers of the New Testament were of the number of the apostles, to whom all these promises were personally made. Of the remaining three, St. Paul repeatedly asserts his own inspiration, and his equality in every point with all the other

* Acts, i. 3. † John, xiv. 16—26.
† Matt. x. 19, 20. Mark, xiii. 11. Luke, xii. 11, 12.

apostles.* With respect to the others, St. Mark and St. Luke, we cannot conceive that God, after inspiring the writers of two Gospels, would leave two other Gospels containing additional facts concerning the life of Christ, and also a very important history of the early Christian church, to be written by uninspired men: nor that these latter writings would have been immediately placed on a level with the former, as it has already been shewn that they were, unless the early Christians had known, what they appear to have unanimously asserted, that St. Mark and St. Luke were filled with the Holy Ghost. Even if it were supposed, though there is no ground for the supposition, that these two writers were not actually inspired; but wrote, the one under the superintendence of St. Peter, the other of St. Paul; the Divine authority of the writings would remain the same. Finally, the fulfilment of predictions recorded in the New Testament forms an additional link in the chain of proofs, by which its inspiration is established.

That the Scriptures of the New Testament have descended pure to our hands is evinced by the accordance of the early versions with our present Greek text: by the collations which have taken place of great numbers of existing manuscripts, some of them extremely ancient: which collations, while they shew that mistakes, as it was to be expected have been made in the individual manuscripts by the transcribers, prove those mistakes to be of trifling importance, and afford the means of correcting them: and by the utter impossibility that either negligence or design could have introduced, without detection, any material alteration into a book dispersed among millions in widely distant countries, and among many discordant sects; regarded by them all as the rule of their faith and practice; and in constant and regular use among them all in public worship, in private meditation, and in their vehement and unceasing controversies with each other.

Receiving then, on these solid grounds of rational conviction, the Holy Scriptures with thankfulness and

* Gal. i. 11, 12. 1 Cor. ii. 10—13. 2 Cor. xi. 5. xii. 11. 1 Thes. ii. iv.

reverence as the word of God; regard and study them daily as the rule to which you are to conform every thought and word and action: and as the rule by which all your thoughts and words and actions will be tried at the last day before the judgment-seat of Christ.

CHAPTER VI.

SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

I. IF the authenticity and inspiration of the Scriptures have been established in the two preceding chapters: then the truth of the Christian religion has also been demonstrated. This proposition is self-evident. Nay, if there had remained any doubt concerning the inspiration of the writers of the Old and New Testament; if it had not pleased God that the Bible should be able to claim a higher character than that of authentic narrative written by uninspired men; Christianity still would have been proved. If the predictions there recorded were actually delivered; if the facts there related actually took place; in other words, if the Bible had merely spoken truth through the aid of human information and veracity; the certainty of the Christian religion would still have been indisputable. If the miraculous circumstances, which, according to antecedent prophecies, were to characterize the birth, the life, the death, and the resurrection of the Messiah, all united in Jesus Christ; he was the Messiah. If the predictions which Jesus Christ delivered were literally fulfilled; if the supernatural powers which he engaged to bestow on his disciples were punctually conferred; he was what he affirmed himself to be, the Son of God, the promised and long expected Redeemer. But when the real state of the case is taken into the account; when we consider that, to render knowledge perfect and to

ensure fidelity from suspicion, the superintending aid of the Holy Spirit of God ever accompanied the sacred penmen; we might presume that every possibility of doubt as to the certainty of the religion thus introduced and confirmed to mankind must vanish from the breasts of unprejudiced enquirers. The question therefore of the truth of Christianity might safely be rested on these grounds. It may be of use, however, on account of the supreme importance of the subject; and from regard to the difference in the degree of force, with which experience shews that different arguments strike different minds; to subjoin to the foregoing remarks some collateral arguments, which evince that the Christian religion came from God.

II. The general state of the world, at the time when Christianity was promulgated, was confessedly such as to render a further revelation of the will of God highly desirable to mankind. The Heathen nations, Greeks, Romans, Barbarians, were immersed in the grossest idolatry. It was not merely that they worshipped stocks and stones. Their supposed deities were usually represented of characters so detestably flagitious, that we should have expected them to have been singled out as objects of abhorrence than of adoration. We know with how much greater proneness and facility men imitate a pattern of vice than of virtue. We know how extremely imperfect are the piety and morality of the collective body of Christians, who nominally at least profess to take their holy and sinless Redeemer for their model, and to look for eternal happiness or misery as the certain consequence of their conduct in the present scene of probation. We might therefore form, by speculative reasoning, a just opinion of the state of morals likely to be prevalent among nations who worshipped Jupiter, and Bacchus, and Mercury, and their associates in the Heathen Pantheon.—Turn to history, and you find the display of depravity, which your imagination had pictured, delineated in still more glaring colours. The scattered examples of eminent virtue recorded in the annals of Greece and Rome, examples the brighter on account of their scarcity and

of the gloomy contrast with which they are surrounded, militate not against the truth of this general representation. The occasional efforts of some philosophers to introduce better principles and better practice, had no effect on the great mass of the community. The philosophers themselves were frequently stained with open vice. Many of their tenets were absurd and even impious: and the rest were too obscure and too refined for popular apprehension, or too little interesting for popular attachment: and being founded on conjecture and theoretical arguments, carried with them no sanction which could ensure stedfast belief or habitual obedience. Socrates, the wisest of the philosophers, avowed in the strongest terms the necessity for the interposition of a Divine instructor for the reformation of the world. From the Heathens cast your eyes on the Jews. What had been the fruit of a dispensation delivered to their forefathers by the voice of God himself, confirmed by unnumbered miracles, upheld by national rewards and national judgments, and enforced by a long succession of prophets? Little more among the bulk of the people, for I speak not of the more virtuous exceptions, than that they were at length purified from idolatry. In other respects they were proverbially proud, selfish, and intolerant: placing their confidence on their groundless traditions, rather than on the Scriptures: on their descent from Abraham, rather than on personal righteousness; on the observance of ceremonial ordinances, rather than on the practice of piety and good works. Such being the general condition of mankind, in consequence of their having rendered thus inefficacious, by their own frailty and perverseness, the invitations and motives to righteousness which their merciful Creator had for so many ages set before them, partly by the light of natural conscience, and partly by special revelation: it perhaps was not wholly unreasonable humbly to hope, that He who had already done so much of his own free will for his undeserving and sinful creatures, might yet in his infinite mercy do somewhat more. At least it was evident, that if he should vouchsafe to them a further discovery of his good pleasure,

and encourage them with additional aids and incitements to virtue; such a dispensation would be a blessing, for which the warmest gratitude would be a most inadequate return. Now, if a considerate man, antecedently to all knowledge of the Christian plan of redemption, had been asked what particulars, consistent with the attributes of God and the situation of mankind, he should be principally solicitous to find in a future revelation; what, after full reflection, would have been his reply? He would have replied, that the utmost stretch of his hopes and of his wishes extended to the following points: full assurance that, on proper and practicable terms, his past sins and even his future offences might be forgiven; a clear and accurate delineation of the path in which he ought to walk; the promise of Divine help to assist him in following that path, and in regaining it if he should go astray; and the certain inheritance, if the should prove obedient, of a life of happiness beyond the grave. All these points are offered and ascertained in the Christian Revelation. Do these facts bear no witness to the truth of Christianity?

III. The truths which the New Testament reveals or confirms respecting the Deity, and the lessons of morality which it teaches, are such as thoroughly to accord with the expectations and conclusions which reason, unprejudiced and enlightened, would form. And thus the sacred book approves itself worthy of God to that faculty which he has bestowed upon us, that it might be, subordinately to Revelation, our constant guide. The power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God are manifest in his works. His moral government of the world, his love of virtue, his abhorrence of guilt, were evinced, as St. Paul teaches us,* even to the Gentile nations by the frame and administration of the universe. And as virtue and vice did not appear to be regularly and fully rewarded or punished under his moral government in the present life; a presumption thence arose that another stage of existence remained behind, in which human actions should receive the recompence which they had severally deserved. Take the Christian Scriptures

* Rom. i. 18—21.

into your hands; and behold all those suggestions of reason established, illustrated, and expanded to perfection. Behold all the duties which a creature such as man can owe to God; piety, devotion, prayer, praise and thanksgiving, cheerful resignation, patient confidence, grateful obedience, reverent fear, habitual, supreme, and unshaken love; described in terms the most precise, inculcated in language the most energetic, recommended by motives the most persuasive, and enforced by sanctions the most awful. Consider in the next place the instructions delivered in that sacred volume respecting the moral obligations owing from man to man. Hear it summing up the whole of that division of human duties in the simple and universally applicable injunction, to love your neighbour as yourself. Hear it abolishing all the narrow distinctions, and cutting off all the pretences and evasions which ignorance, and pride, and enmity, are perpetually labouring to establish; by declaring, that in the term neighbour every individual of the human race is comprehended. Hear it illustrating, by a variety of details, the import of its universal precept, in exhortations to justice, to mercy, to forgiveness of injuries, to unfailing kindness, meekness, gentleness, peace, and purity, and in the strongest denunciations against the opposite vices: and anticipating transgressions in their very source, by proclaiming that the wish to commit sin is in effect the commission of it; that sanctity, uprightness, and purity of thought, no less than of word and action, are indispensably necessary to every one who seeks salvation through Christ. A tree is known by its fruits. A system of doctrines thus in every particular worthy of God could come from God only.*

* In Dr. Paley's View of the Evidences of Christianity, a work which, on account of its general and very great excellence, I wish strongly to recommend to universal attention: the chapter which treats of the morality of the Gospel, though abounding in judicious observations, appears to me in several material points liable to just objection. It is indeed the general merit of the work which makes me feel obliged by motives of duty to suggest an especial caution to the reader with respect to the partic-

IV. Look in the next place into the character of the teacher of this religion, Jesus Christ. Consider him in his public ministry, and in his private retirement; in his actions and his discourses, his miracles and his sufferings. Compare the piety, the morality, the unbounded love of God and of man, which he inculcated on his disciples, with his own unvarying practice. Ask yourself whether he, who taught and who practised such a religion, could be less than the Son of God?*

V. The facts related in the Gospels and the Acts receive confirmation from the accounts incidentally given by Pagan historians who lived about the same period. It is not to be expected that the Roman writers, who held the Jews in supreme contempt, and in consequence of that contempt take little notice of the internal affairs of this people, should throw much light on the details of the Gospel history, or of the progress of the Christian religion. The religion they regarded as a sect of Judaism; and did not give themselves the trouble of making any inquiries concerning it. The little, however, which they do say relative to the subject, has its importance; and is the unsuspected testimony of enemies. Tacitus expressly ascribes the rise of the Christians to

lar chapter in question. That I may give, as I ought to do some reason for this caution, it seems necessary to observe, without dwelling on other points, that Dr. Paley's account of the morality of the Gospel is radically influenced by the equally false and dangerous standard of morals, general expediency, adopted by him, under an improved form, from its original asserter, Mr. Hume: that it is deteriorated by a studied distinction wholly unwarrantable, and if unwarrantable, extremely pernicious, between public and private morality; and by a limitation subjoined to certain directions of our Saviour, a limitation unsupported by argument, and completely overthrown (vol. ii. p. 110. 1st edition) by the very first of the texts brought forward to support it: "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, *murders*, &c." And see the preceding paragraph.

* I forbear to enlarge in this place on the character of our Saviour, as that subject will afterwards be treated in a distinct chapter.

Christ; whom he also affirms to have been put to death by Pontius Pilate the governor of Judea. Suetonius represents the Christians, whom he confounds with the Jews, as raising tumults in Rome at the instigation of Christ, (Chrestus, of whose death he seems to have been ignorant,) and as banished on that account from the city by the emperor Claudius. Amidst the want of accurate intelligence which the historian here manifests, he unconsciously bears attestation to the truth of the book of the Acts of the Apostles; which records the circumstance, that "Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome.*" The rapid progress of Christianity and the opposition it experienced, which the same book describes, are also corroborated by both these historians, and likewise by Pliny. Tacitus, speaking of Christianity, avers that this "detestable superstition," an appellation from which a judgment may be formed of his knowledge of its doctrines and morality, had not only overspread Judea where it originated, but had also extended itself to Rome: and relates, that a "vast multitude" of Christians were condemned there. Suetonius corroborates this relation by mentioning the persecution (his expression is, the punishment) of the Christians at Rome by Nero. Pliny, in his memorable letter to the emperor Trajan, describes Bithynia as so filled with Christians, both in the towns and the villages, that a general desertion of the Pagan temples and worship had taken place; and states himself as sending to execution all persons who were brought before him on the charge of being of this religion, and avowed themselves to be so. All these accounts, it may be added, support in a manner equally strong the truth of the Gospels, in which our Saviour repeatedly forewarns his disciples of the persecutions that awaited them; and of the epistles likewise, in which St. Paul and the other sacred writers speak of those persecutions as then actually taking place.

VI. It is impossible to suppose with any shadow of reason that the apostles, in preaching Christianity, were

* Acts, xviii. 2.

deceived themselves as to the truth of the religion which they taught. How was it possible that they could be deceived? They did not take up their doctrine from hearsay, or from written documents; in either of which cases there might have been opportunity for fraud or error to have insinuated itself. They were convinced by the long experience of their own senses. They were the constant and familiar companions of Jesus Christ. His life and actions were thoroughly known to them. His instructions they received from his own lips: in public and in private; before his resurrection, and after it. Of his numerous miracles they were eye-witnesses. The miracles too were of such a sort, that the disciples could not be mistaken in judging as to their reality. Whether men acknowledged to have been blind even from their birth became possessed of sight; whether hearing was restored to the deaf, soundness to the lame, life to the dead: these were facts concerning which the apostles, who were spectators, could entertain no doubts. If such deeds as these, performed too in various places, in the face of day, of multitudes, and of enemies, had been deceits and mere pretences to miraculous power; the imposture must have been detected instantly. The object of the miracle remained there to be examined; and was examined, as we know, by the adversaries of Christ, whenever occasion offered, with sufficient strictness. Examination might always take place, and would naturally take place if any doubt subsisted, by the disciples themselves. They associated, as well as Christ himself, with Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead. They associated for forty days with Christ after his own resurrection. Could they be ignorant whether Lazarus or Christ were really risen? Could they be ignorant whether they actually saw Christ ascend unto heaven, after giving them his final benediction? Could they be ignorant whether two angels stood by them, on the disappearance of our Saviour among the clouds, and told them that He should again visibly return from heaven to earth at the end of the world? Could they be ignorant

whether on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost did actually come upon them, according to the promise of their departed Lord; whether they were actually able from that moment to speak various languages, with which they had until that moment been unacquainted? All this and much more that might be added on the same head, is utterly impossible.

VII But though the supposition, that the apostles were themselves deceived, must be given up as untenable; might not they knowingly deceive the people? This new supposition implies three things. It implies that the apostles were wicked enough to preach a religion which they knew to be false: that they had sufficient inducementsto be guilty of this imposition: and that they could carry on such an imposition without detection. Let us investigate each of these points separately. First then with regard to the wickedness of the apostles. Not considering, or not regarding, the charges of wickedness which might be advanced against them in future ages; they have not drawn up any formal characters of each other. Nor is the omission material. For to those who see other grounds for trusting the apostles, such characters would have been superfluous; and by those who charge them with wickedness, would not have been believed. You must therefore collect their characters from the incidental notices of the conduct of the individuals, which you find dispersed in the scriptures. What then do you find recorded in the Scriptures concerning them? You find many instances of human frailty. You find an extreme unwillingness to relinquish the ambitious hopes which they had cherished of worldly power and grandeur under the kingdom of the Messiah. You find a rooted attachment to the prejudices of their countrymen against Samaritans and Gentiles. You find a cowardly desertion of their Lord and master in the hour of his affliction: and in the case of Peter, a repeated and blasphemous denial of Jesus Christ, for whom he had recently affirmed himself ready to die. Is the plain and unvarnished confession given by themselves of these and other instances of infirmity a mark of wickedness? Is

it not a token of candour and integrity? Is not their openness in recording to posterity what they had done amiss, an argument that what accidentally appears to their credit in the same writings may be trusted? If you believe the account of St. Peter's denial, and all its aggravations; will you not credit the account contained in the same books of his bitter and permanent repentance? If you believe the disciples when they tell you, that on the apprehension of Christ they all forsook him and fled; and that on first being informed of his resurrection, they regarded the report as an idle tale: will you not believe them when they assert their own subsequent conviction, their intercourse with their master after his turn to life, and their commission from him to go and baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost? To these considerations let me add another suggested by the doctrines which they taught. The religion which they preached was undeniably a religion of consummate holiness and purity. They went from province to province, from country to county inculcating the love and the fear of God, abhorrence of sin, and the perpetual practice of integrity, sincerity, truth, and every other similar moral obligation. And this doctrine, it seems, they laboriously preached day after day and year after year, conscious during every moment that their own conduct was an uninterrupted scene of deliberate falsehood and hypocrisy! Is there the faintest appearance of credibility in the supposition? What could induce villains to preach virtue? Nothing, you reply, except to gain by it. Gain by it! Let us enquire then in the second place, what the apostles were to gain by preaching Christianity? Upon the present supposition, that they wickedly preached it, knowing it to be an imposture, they of course looked for no advantage in the next world as a reward for their preaching. Their reward, whatever it might be, must be sought in the present life. What then did they expect to gain in the present life? They expected to gain what they did gain; persecution, scorn and misery. "The servant is not greater "than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they

"will also persecute you. Because ye are not of the world "therefore the world hateth you. Ye shall be betray- "ed both by parents and brethren and kinsfolks and "friends. They will deliver you up to the councils; "and they will scourge you in their synagogues. "They shall lay hands on you, delivering you up to the "synagogues and into prisons, being brought before "kings and rulers for my name's sake. They shall "deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you; "and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's "sake. The time cometh, that he that killeth you "will think that he doeth God service. These things "have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye "may remember that I told you of them."* Such was the earthly recompense which our Saviour had taught his disciples to expect. Consult Tacitus, and Suetonius, and Pliny; consult the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles, especially those of St. Paul; and you will find that these expectations were not disappointed. "If "in this life only we have hope in Christ," said St. Paul most truly, of himself and the apostles and the other Christians of his day; and in this life only the apostles, if they were deceivers, could have hope; "If "in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all "men the most miserable."† The expectations of the apostles for their reward were manifestly directed beforehand to a better life, and to that alone. And that single circumstance is sufficient to prove that they were not deceivers. Thirdly, if they had been deceivers, detection would have stared them in the face, and would have been inevitable. If their whole narrative was replete with falsehoods, they were falsehoods, which the inhabitants of Judea could not but know to be such. If Christ did not fulfil the predictions which the apostles affirmed him to have accomplished; if he did not perform the miracles which the apostle affirmed him to have wrought; all this the Jews must have known.

* Luke xxi. 12. 16. Matt. x. 17. xxiv. 9. John, xv. 19, 20. xvi. 2. 4.

† Cor. xv. 19. and see iv. 9. 13.

Their willingness to discover fraud in the apostles, and to make the most of any discovery, will not be doubted. They were as eager to expose as to stone and to crucify. But from the Acts we find that they admitted the miraculous facts averred by the apostles, and endeavoured to explain them away. The premises they allowed; but drew through bigotry and prejudice an erroneous conclusion. Yet even of these bigotted and prejudiced men thousands were converted almost immediately after the ascension of Christ. Had there been fraud, detection must instantly have followed. And the fraud detected and exploded in Judea, could never have hoped to gain a proselyte among the Gentiles.

VIII. The difficulties which Christianity had to encounter from its very commencement and during its progress were such, that its prevalence could result only from the irresistible force of truth. Consider under what unfavourable circumstances, as to worldly advantages, it was introduced. Jesus Christ, the founder of the religion, appeared in the most humble station of life. Without rank, or wealth, or friends, known only as "the carpenter, the son of Mary,"* and as the inhabitant of Nazareth, a place proverbially in such disrepute that the mere fact of his belonging to it was thought almost conclusive against his pretensions to be the Messiah ;† he announced himself as the promised Saviour of the world. The disciples whom he selected to be his instruments in this undertaking were, like himself, poor destitute, and disregarded : and one at least of them was of an occupation which rendered those who pursued it singularly odious. In propounding his new religion to his countrymen he enjoyed none of those favourable circumstances, he used none of those

* Mark vi. 3.

† Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him ; we have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him ; can there any good thing come out of Nazareth ? John i. 45, 46.

arts, to which the authors of new doctrines have so often been indebted, and to which Mahomet in particular owed his whole success. He did not begin his undertaking in a country divided into many petty and disjointed sects: but among a people united in attachment to a venerable establishment armed with no small share of civil power, as well as ecclesiastical authority. He had neither the inclination nor the means of promoting the diffusion of his doctrine by force of arms. He neither permitted vicious indulgencies nor promised licentious rewards to his adherents. He flattered no sect, however powerful: he attached himself to no party, however numerous: he disguised no truths, however unpalatable: he spared no criminals, however formidable and malignant. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians, were alike the objects of his severest reprehension. Towards the common people he used no species of undue conciliation. Their prejudices in favour of a temporal Messiah he discountenanced: their offers to make him their king he steadily rejected: their interested attendance in hopes of being fed by a repetition of the miracle of the loaves and fishes he pointedly and publicly reproved. So little hold had he obtained on their affections, that after he had employed between three and four years in his ministry, they eagerly co-operated with their rulers in procuring his death. He died forsaken by his followers: as a malefactor; and by a mode of death, according to the opinion of the age and country, the most infamous. When the preaching of his doctrine was renewed, after his ascension, by his disciples, labouring under the weight of the odium which had overtaken their master; it was renewed with additions which rendered it still more hateful to the Jews. The apostles, besides charging them with the innocent blood of Jesus, and affirming his resurrection from the grave, and his exaltation to the right hand of God; not only announced in plainer terms than he had employed, the abolition of the Mosaic rites and ordinances, so dear to the hearts of the whole Jewish people; but they speedily proclaimed a doctrine, if possible, still more obnoxious, to which, in consequence

of his own exclusive mission to the Jews, he had but slightly and seldom alluded, the annihilation of all the peculiar privileges of the Jewish race, and the free admission of the abhorred Samaritans and Gentiles to every blessing of the Christian covenant. The active opposition, the unrelenting enmity and vengeance, with which the Jews persecuted Christianity and its teachers, were correspondent to the virulent detestation which these tenets were adapted to excite. When the apostles turned to the Romans, the sovereign masters of every country recorded in the Acts as having been the scene of apostolical labours; were they likely to experience a more favourable reception than they had found among their own countrymen? The very circumstance of their being Jews ensured to them at once the aversion and the contempt of the Roman world. Personally odious, they were rendered more odious by their doctrine: a doctrine which not only alarmed, by being misconceived, the jealous suspicions of the Romans concerning a king, a rival of Cæsar, whom they expected to arise in Judea;* but declared war to extermination against every deity of the Pantheon, against every one of the idolatrous sacrifices, rites, and institutions, public or domestic, in which the Romans had been trained from their childhood; and to which they ascribed the gradual rise of Rome during more than seven centuries, from an obscure village to the rank of Imperial metropolis of the earth. The numerous and sanguinary persecutions, which the apostles and the early Christians endured from the Romans, bear indisputable testimony to the abhorrence with which that people regarded and opposed Christianity. Yet in the face of universal opposition Christianity marched forward from conquest to conquest; and before the end of three centuries from

* This prevailing expectation is recorded by Tacitus (Hist. lib. v. c. 13.) and by Suetonius (lib. viii. c. 4.) And of the jealousy which it occasioned among the Romans ample proof is afforded by the conduct of Pilate, Matt. xxvii. 11. John xix. 12—16, and by the proceedings at Thessalonica related Acts xvii. see particularly ver. 7.

the death of Christ reigned triumphant over the whole Roman empire. "Thus mightily grew the word of "God, and prevailed." What could have thus prevailed, but the word of God?

IX. There remain two other leading heads of argument strongly confirming the truth of Christianity, which, at the same time that I pass over some subordinate yet not unimportant considerations tending to the same conclusion, must not be omitted. One of these arises from the completion of many prophecies delivered in the New Testament; particularly from the fulfilment of those which concern the Christian church, and the apostacy and usurpations of Papal Rome. The other is drawn from the numerous coincidences reciprocally subsisting between the several Epistles of St. Paul, and between those epistles and the book of Acts: coincidences which, while they prove themselves beyond dispute on close examination, are so little obvious to common observers that it is impossible to suppose they were designedly inserted, or that they produced otherwise than by the uniformity of truth. The advantages, however, of unfolding these two heads of argument in detail I am obliged to forego: as the statement and investigation of particulars requisite to enable the reader to satisfy himself respecting their validity would inevitably occupy a space disproportioned to the nature and size of the present work.*

Such and so many are the distinct lines of proof, by which the truth of the Christian religion is established! So provident has been the goodness of the Ruler of the Universe in confirming by unanswerable arguments, all concurring, like the rays of a circle, in one central point; yet differing in their nature, and thus the more adapted to make impression on different minds, the sacred Gospel of his Son! Why then are there thousands, enabled by their attainments and opportunities fully to

* On the first of these heads of argument the reader is referred to Bishop Hurd's twelve Sermons on Prophecy: to Bishop Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies: and to other writers on the subject: and on the second to Dr. Paley's Horæ Paulinæ: a work in which it was originally brought forward, and is illustrated with great acuteness and felicity.

examine and accurately to appreciate the evidences of Christianity, who doubt or disbelieve its truth? the causes are obvious. These unhappy men do not enquire into the subject; or they enquire not with suitable dispositions of heart. Immersed in the pursuits of ambition, of profit, or of pleasure; puffed up with arrogant opinions of their own knowledge and of their own virtue; revolting at the humiliating doctrine that human nature is corrupt, and in need of an atoning Redeemer; accustomed to disdain whatever they think it possible to class among common prejudices and vulgar superstitions; hearing of the prevalence in different times and places of different religions, all of which they know cannot be true, but all of which they conclude may equally be false: prepossessed against Christianity by difficulties which they imagine it to contain; by witty cavils and objections aimed against it, which they take for granted are just; and by a cause still more to be regretted, the unchristian lives of many of its professors; and above all, averse to abandon those vicious principles and habits, which they perceive to be utterly prohibited by the Gospel, and to acknowledge the certainty of that punishment, which if they admit the Gospel to be true, they must necessarily own to await themselves should they continue in their sins: actuated by some of these, or similar prepossessions, they refuse to examine into the evidences of the Christian religion; or they examine slighly, partially, uncandidly, with minds predisposed to find objections, to take offence, and to condemn. The faith which Christianity claims is not credulity; but assent founded on willing enquiry and rational conviction. "The people of Berea," saith the evangelist, "were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that "*they received the word with all readiness of mind, and* "*searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were* "*so.*"* "Be ready always," saith the apostle, "to give an answer to every one that asketh you *a reason* of the hope that is in you."† But in all enquiries respecting religion, as with respect to every other subject, the enquirer, if he would really discover truth, must examine

* Acts, xvii. 11. † 1 Pet. iii. 15.

with seriousness, with patience, with humility ; with a heart sincerely disposed to embrace whatever he shall discover to be true ; and with a reverent desire that the Supreme Being, who is the fountain of knowledge, may lead him into all truth. If he examines without these dispositions, what can be expected but that his examination should confirm him in his prejudices and errors? "He that will do the will of God," saith our Saviour, "shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."* Have you any doubt as to the truth of Christianity? Let your heart be prepared to obey whatever Christianity, if true, shall be found to command : and you will not conclude a patient enquiry without being convinced of its truth. But "keep thy heart with all diligence : for out of it are the issues of life.†"

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE LEADING DOCTRINES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

I. THE being and the attributes of God are truths, which lie at the root of all religion. "He that cometh "to God, must believe that He is; and that He is a re- "warder of them that diligently seek him."‡ They are truths to the discovery of which the Heathen world was perfectly competent. In the days of Pagan darkness, when the light of the Divine countenance seemed as it were withdrawn from mankind, "God," saith the apostle "left not himself without witness; in that he did "good, and gave us rain from Heaven, and fruitful sea- "sons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."§ Why is it that St. Paul pronounces the idolatrous and aban-

* John, vii. 17. † Proverbs, iv. 23. ‡ Hebrews, xi. 6.
§ Acts, xiv. 17.

doned Gentiles inexcusable? "Because that which may "be known of God is manifest in them: for God hath "shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him "from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being "understood by the things that are made; even his "eternal power and Godhead: so that they are without "excuse, because that when they knew God," (or might thus have known him had they been willing,) "they glorified Him not as God"* by purity of worship and holiness of life. The eternal existence, and the attributes of the Deity, his omniprescience, his infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, his holiness, his justice, and his other unbounded affections, were inculcated on the Jews by express revelation; and are described in the sublimest language by the sacred writers, especially by the prophets, in the Old Testament. These fundamental truths necessarily form the ground-work of Christianity. They are however so obvious in their nature, and so generally recognised, that to dilate upon them is not requisite. I proceed therefore to consider such of the other leading doctrines of the New Testament as are either peculiar to the Christian religion, or have received from that religion such additional illustration as to require to be separately noticed. These doctrines may be comprised under four general heads; which will be arranged in the order according to which they may be most conveniently discussed. The first will relate to the corruption of human nature: the second to the resurrection and the future judgment: the third to the nature and office of Christ: the fourth to the nature and office of the Holy Spirit.

II. The depravity of human nature has already been unavoidably noticed in speaking of the fall of man, by which it was produced. We learn from the book of Genesis, that our first parents, deluded by the evil spirit, who availed himself of the instrumentality of the serpent to accomplish their ruin, concurred in disobeying the sole prohibition which their Creator had imposed as the trial of their obedience. By this rebellion against their Sovereign and Benefactor they lost, to

* Romans, i. 19, 20.

gether with their title to immortality, their primeval innocence: they lost their purity and holiness, the image of God in which they had been created. Sin, the forerunner of death, entered into the world, and clave inseparably to fallen man. The children of Adam were born "in his own image," no longer that of God. The tide of wickedness, shewing its early power by the murder of Abel, and gradually spreading itself until it had absorbed in its grossest impurities the whole race of man, Noah and his family excepted, proved in the antediluvian world, that from a corrupted origin nothing but what was corrupt could proceed. After the flood the antecedent depravity remained unaltered. "The "imagination of man's heart" still continued "evil "from his youth." At the time of the call of Abraham, almost before the eyes of Noah were closed, and long before the death of his son Shem, idolatry and its attendant enormities had ensnared almost all mankind. The history of the Jews, the chosen people of God, instructed by an immediate and special revelation from Heaven; separated by rites and usages scarcely less than by religious knowledge from the contagion of surrounding guilt; excited from time to time to stedfastness in their duty by miracles, by prophets, by unmerited mercies and by signal judgments; yet, under all these appeals to their understandings, their gratitude, their hopes, and their fears, obstinately and irreclaimably wicked; the history of this people from their origin to their dispersion by the Romans is no other than a practical and unbroken exemplification of the native corruption of the human heart. The blindness and flagitiousness of the ancient Gentile world which, enjoying much fainter gleams of religious light, became proportionally immersed in blacker depths of ignorance and profligacy; the continuance of the same state of darkness and guilt in regions not irradiated by revelation; the lamentable prevalence of wickedness among those who enjoy the full light of the Gospel; all these facts unite in attesting and exemplifying the same corruption.

To this corruption the christian Scriptures, in recording the wonders of that plan of redemption by

which its fatal consequences were to be removed, refer, directly or indirectly, on many occasions, and in the clearest manner. It is indeed on that corruption that the whole plan of Christianity is established. We are therefore not surprised at the gloomy catalogue of crimes, which our Saviour describes as proceeding from the human heart:* nor at the enumeration given by St. Paul of the works of the flesh,† the works to which men are by nature prone. We are not surprised to hear this apostle affirming, "we have proved both Jews "and Gentiles, that they are all under sin: as it is "written, There is none righteous, no not one: There "is none that understandeth, there is none that seek-"eth after God: they are all gone out of the way; "they are altogether become unprofitable; there is none "that doeth good, no not one."‡ We are not surprised to hear him affirming, "I know, that in me, that is "in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to will is "present with me; but how to perform that which is "good I find not. For the good that I would I do "not; but the evil which I would not that I do."§ Nor are we surprised when he avows concerning himself and his Ephesian convers, that they also were formerly "dead in trespasses and sins according to the "course of this world, fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, "and of the mind; and were by nature, children of "wrath even as others."‖ To accumulate similar passages is endless.

In this doctrine of the natural corruption of the human heart, taken in conjunction with another doctrine, on which the Scriptures are no less explicit; that the remedy for this corruption is provided by the Almighty not as a debt owing to man, but as the free bounty of Divine grace; certain persons have imagined that they have discovered difficulties not to be obviated consistently with some of the attributes of God. If you feel a doubt of this kind springing in your breast, remember the infinite distance between yourself and your Ma-

* Matt. xv. 19. † Gal. v. 19, 21. ‡ Rom. iii. 10, &c.

§ Rom. vii. 18, &c. ‖ Ephes. ii. 1, &c.

ker. Remember how little qualified you are, in consequence of that distance, to criticise or to appreciate the details of his plans of governing the universe: plans of which you perceive so very small a part. Remember that in every one of his works which you investigate their are depths to you unfathomable. Remember that the corruption of human nature is a fact demonstrated by experience. Suppose Christianity to be false, or never to have been revealed: the state of human nature remains unaltered. That doctrine therefore, let it inevitably bring with it whatever difficulties it may, brings none which presses harder upon Christianity than upon any other religion. Consult the Scriptures. If you there find the existence of this corruption unequivocally declared; be satisfied that its existence is perfectly compatible with the justice, with the mercy, with every attribute of God. If you find a further and unequivocal declaration, that the remedy for this corruption and its consequences is a free gift, not a debt, on the part of the Deity: be satisfied that this arrangement likewise is entirely consistent with all his perfections. You already know, or may know, from the dealings of God with men, what is sufficient to convince you that, although "his ways are unsearcha-"ble and his judgments past finding out;"* although "clouds and darkness are round about him; yet right-"eousnes and judgment are the habitation of his "throne."†

The influence of this original depravation of nature affects every individual at every period of his life. It is an eternal enemy always at work; but operating in the most dangerous manner, when the concurrence of favourable circumstances arms it with additional force, It perverts the inclinations of men; darkens the understanding; adds strength to the passion, efficacy to temptation; disposes the heart to evil, indisposes it to good. Would you learn to place a true value on the blessings of redemption through Christ; on that dispensation which is revealed as the only method by which

* Rom. xi. 33. † Psalm xcvii. 2.

the Divine wisdom had appointed, that the fallen descendants of Adam should be restored to the image and favour of God? Consider the corrupt nature of which you partake; the guilt, and the punishment with which, but for the grace of God in the Christian dispensation of mercy, you would in consequence of that corrupt nature be overwhelmed.

III. The prolongation of human existence beyond the grave is a subject which in all ages has exercised the understandings, the hopes, and the fears of mankind. To serious enquirers there could not but appear a considerable probability, anterior to the light of revelation, that man would survive the stroke of death. That mere matter should be possessed of thought, of imagination, of reasoning, of powers, of choice, and spontaneous agency, was a position seemingly incomprehensible. Hence it was justly inferred that the soul was distinct from the body; and, if distinct, not very likely to be involved in the distruction of the frame which it inhabited. The strong repugnance to annihilation implanted in human nature by the hand of God, formed a presumption that annihilation was not designed to be the lot of humanity. The capacity of progressive improvement in the faculties of the mind, the ardent desires of the soul for degrees of knowledge and happiness unattainable on earth, excited a reasonable hope that a state of being yet remained, in which those faculties might be advanced, and those desires gratified, to perfection. Another and still more weighty argument could not escape notice. That the world was under a moral Governor was apparent: yet that virtue and vice were not uniformly or accurately recompensed with present happiness and present misery was undeniable. Hence it seemed an almost necessary deduction, that complete retribution was reserved for another scene of existence. All these arguments however were only presumptions. They were highly probable conjectures. But in a matter of such extreme importance the mind could not repose itself with satisfactory assurance on speculations. The natural and moral arguments for the immortality of the soul were also too

abstruse to make a general or a durable impression on the vulgar. To philosophers themselves they carried no permanent conviction.* Pluto, and Minos, and Tartarus, and Elysium, afforded imagery, and allusions, and episodes to poets: but they reached not the understanding, nor influenced the heart. Among the Jews, in the early periods of their history, indications that a life after the conclusion of this was expected are few and obscure. In later times those traces became more numerous and more distinct. Yet even in the days of our Saviour one of the principal sects, the Sadducees, denied a future existence; and does not appear to have been rendered generally unpopular to the Jewish nation by its doctrine. How therefore were the minds of men to be set at rest, but by a free communication of the truth, in terms which could not be misunderstood, and from authority which could not be questioned? The Gospel has made this communication. "It has brought life and immortality to light."† It has lifted up the veil which hung over eternity. It has revealed to man, that in the unknown and unbounded realms of Omnipotence an habitation is reserved for him; an habitation of bliss, or of misery, proportioned to his conduct upon earth. It has revealed to him that all his thoughts, words, and actions, shall be examined in the presence of assembled men and angels on the great day appointed for judgment, before the throne of Jesus Christ. It has revealed to man that his mortal body shall be raised from the grave; shall be re-united to his soul; shall be rendered, like his soul, immortal; shall be partaker with his soul of punishment, or of reward. "As the Father hath life in "Himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in "Himself: and hath given him authority to execute

* Nescio quomodo, dum lego, assentior: cum posui librum, et mecum ipse de immortalitate animorum cœpi cogitare, assensio omnis illa elabitur. This is the language even of Cicero; Tusc. Quæst. lib. i. c. 11. In another place, speaking of the same subject, he describes himself as "dubitans, circumspectans, hæsitans, tanquam ratis in mari immenso vehitur." c. 30.

† 2 Tim. i. 10.

"judgment also, because He is the Son of Man;"* because, being the Son of God, he vouchsafed to become the Son of Man, and to take upon himself the personal experience of human infirmities.† "The "Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all "judgment unto the Son: that all men may honour "the Son, even as they honour the Father."‡—"The "hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves "shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that "have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and "they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of "damnation."§—"The Son of Man shall come in the "glory of his Father with his angels: and then he shall "reward every man according to his works."‖—"When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and "all the holy angels with him; then shall he sit upon "the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one "from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep "from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his "right hand; but the goats on his left. Then shall "the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye "blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared "for you from the foundation of the world.—Then "shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart "from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared "for the devil and his angels.—And these shall go "away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous "into life eternal."¶—"We must all appear before "the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that "he hath done, whether it be good or bad."** "God "shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel."††—"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the "archangel, and with the trump of God."‡‡—"For the "trumpet shall sound; and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this cor-

* John v. 26, 27. † Heb. iv. 15. ‡ John v. 22.
§ John v. 28, 29. ‖ Matt. xvi. 27. ¶ Matt. xxv. 31—34. 41. 46
** 2 Cor. v. 10. †† Rom. ii. 16. ‡‡ 1 Thess. iv. 16.

"ruptible must put on incorruption: and this mortal "must put on immortality."* Conformable to these representations was the prophetic vision of the final judgment revealed to St. John. "I saw a great white "throne, and Him that sat on it: from whose face "the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was "found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small "and great, stand before God. And the books were "opened: and another book was opened, which is "the book of life: and the dead were judged out of "those things which were written in the books, accord-"ing to their works. And the sea gave up the dead, "which were in it: and death and hell delivered up the "dead which were in them; and they were judged, "every man, according to their works; and whosoever "was not found written in the book of life, was cast "into the lake of fire."†

The state of happiness, and the state of misery, severally prepared for the righteous and the ungodly, are not described to us in detail: partly, we may presume, because a knowledge of them in detail would not have been advantageous to us during our mortal course: and partly, because the full comprehension of the bliss to be enjoyed by the glorified spirits of just men made perfect, and of the sufferings to be endured by those whose obstinate wickedness shall have involved them in destruction, is beyond the grasp of the present faculties of man. "Eye hath not seen," saith the apostle, "nor "ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of "man to conceive, the things which God hath prepar-"ed for them that love him."‡ The same description, it is probable, might be applied to the punishments which await the wicked. With respect, however, to that happiness and that misery, two things are clear: that each is extreme; and that each is unchangeable. The rest is conveyed in general terms, adapted to impress on the heart those momentous truths. The recompense of those who are received into happiness is denominated, "Glory, honour, immortality, eternal life;§

* Cor. i. xv. 52, 53. † Rev. xx. 11—15. ‡ 2 Cor. ii. 9.
§ Rom. ii. 7.

" eternal salvation ;*a* the presence of the glory of " God ;*b* a crown of righteousness ;*c* a crown of glory " that fadeth not away ;*d* an exceeding and eternal " weight of glory ;*e* an inheritance incorruptible and " undefiled, reserved in Heaven.*f* The righteous shall " shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.*g* " They can die no more ; for they are equal unto the " angels : and are the children of God, being the chil- " dren of the resurrection.*h* They shall be with Christ :*i* " they shall be for ever with the Lord ;*k* and be like " Him, and see Him as he is,*l* face to face.*m* There " shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying ; " neither shall there be any more pain.*n* And there " shall be no more curse : for the throne of God and " the Lamb shall be" among the righteous. " And " they shall see his face : the Lord God giveth them " light : and they shall reign for ever and ever."*o* The future state of the wicked is termed " indignation and " wrath, tribulation and anguish :*p* the lake which burn- " eth with fire and brimstone :*q* outer darkness, and a " furnace of fire, where shall be weeping, and wailing, " and gnashing of teeth :*r* everlasting punishment, eter- " nal damnation :*s* everlasting destruction from the pre- " sence of the Lord and the glory of his power :*t* hell, " where the worm dieth not, and the fire is never quench- " ed :*u* the place of torment, day and night, for ever and " ever."*v*

IV. How then is this happiness to be attained, this misery to be escaped, by a being like man, frail and prone to iniquity ? The Scriptures answer the question : by the grace of God, though Jesus Christ our Saviour. In the Scriptures this dispensation of mercy is unfold- ed. They reveal the nature and the office of Jesus Christ.

a Heb. v. 9. *b* Jude, 24. *c* 2 Tim. iv. 8. *d* 1 Pet. v. 4. *e* 2 Cor. iv. 17. *f* 1 Pet. i 4. *g* Mat. xiii. 43. *h* Luke, xx. 36. *i* John, xii. 26. xvii. 24. *k* 1 Thes. iv. 17. *l* 1 John, iii. 2. *m* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. *n* Rev. xxi. 4. *o* Rev. xxii. 3—5. *p* Rom ii 8, 9. *q* Rev. xxi. 8. *r* Mat. viii 12. xiii 42. *s* Mat. xxv. 46. Mark, iii. 29. *t* 2 Thes. i. 9. *u* Mark, ix. 43. 46. 48. *v* Luke, xvi. 28. Rev. xx. 10.

The nature of the great Redeemer is described in language which proclaims him intitled not merely to our gratitude, our love, our reverence, our homage, but to our adoration. Many centuries before his appearance upon earth he was announced by Isaiah under the denomination of "The Mighty God, God with us."*w* The New Testament presents him to the world in the same character. He is styled "the only begotten Son of "God ;*x* the brightness of his Father's glory, and the "express image of his person ;*y* the image of the in-"visible God ;*z* the Word of God ;*a* the Lord of Glo-"ry ;*b* the true God, God manifested in the flesh, God "over all blessed for ever ;*c* the Word, who in the "beginning was with God, and was God."*d* By the Father himself he is expressly called God.*e* Of himself he says, "I and my Father are one."*f*—"Before "Abraham was, I am."*g* He commands his disciples to baptize all nations in his name conjointly with that of the Father and of the Holy Ghost.*h* He affirms that none knows the Father, but the Son: and that none knows the Son, but the Father.*i* All the angels of God are commanded to worship him.*k* In him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily.*l* Adoration and prayer were addressed to him by St. Stephen ; and at the very time when that martyr was "full of the Holy Ghost."*m* He is represented in the book of Revelations as receiving universal worship in conjunction with the Father.*n* His name stands united with that of the Father and the Holy Ghost in the apostolical benediction.*o* He is characterised, and characterised by himself, when he appears to St. John, by the identical terms, expressive of eternal existence and perfec-

w Isaiah, ix. 6. vii. 13. Mat. i. 23. *x* John iii 16. *y* Heb. i. 3 *z* Colos. i. 15. *a* Rev. xix. 13. *b* 1 Cor. ii. 8. James i. 2. *c* John xx. 28. Rom. ix. 5. 1 John v. 20. 1 Tim. iii. 16. *d* John i. 1. *e* Heb. i. 8. *f* John x. 30. and see 33. *g* John viii. 58. and compare Exod. iii. 14. *h* Mat. xxviii. 19. *i* Mat. xi. 27. *k* Heb. i. 6. *l* Colos. ii. 9. *m* Acts vii. 55. *n* Rev. v. 13. *o* 2 Cor. xiii. 14. and see Rev. i. 4 5.

tion, which are at the very same time applied, and had also been applied in the Old Testament, as characteristic of God the Father.*p* Further; to this great and glorious Saviour, the second person in the Divine Trinity, the immediate agency of creating and preserving the world is unequivocally and repeatedly ascribed. It is he by whom God "made the worlds."*q* It is he who "upholdeth all things by the word of his power."*r*—"All things were made by him; and without "him was not any thing made that was made"*s* By "him were all things created that are in heaven, "and that are in earth, visible and invisible: whether "they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or "powers: all things were created by him, and for him. "And he is before all things: and by him all things "consist."*t* Finally, by his heavenly Father himself he is thus addressed: "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast "laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are "the works of thine hand. They shall perish; but thou "remainest: and they all shall wax old, as doth a gar"ment. And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up and "they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and "thy years shall not fail."*u*

To some persons this fundamental doctrine, the Divinity of our blessed Saviour, seems attended with insuperable difficulties. That it is attended with difficulties I do not deny. But consider, in the first place, the difficulties on the other side of the question. Suppose, for a moment, the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ to be false: then read once more the preceding paragraph; weigh the natural import of the titles, attributes, and descriptions there quoted as being applied in the Scriptures to Christ; and ask yourself whether, if he to whom they are so applied be other than God, there is any meaning in words, any confi-

p Compare Isaiah, xliv. 6. xlviii. 12. (and at the same time observe carefully the latter part of v. 11.) Rev. i. 8. with Rev. i. 17. ii. 8. xxi. 6. xxii. 13.

q. Heb. i. 2. *r* Heb. i. 3. *s* John, i. 3. *t* Colos. i. 16, 17.

u Heb i. 10—12

dence to be reposed in language, even in the language of Revelation. Ask yourself whether it be possible that inspiration would be given, and given by the God of wisdom, goodness, and truth, in such a manner as to have deceived, it is not too much to say necessarily to have deceived, the mass of the Christian world from the days of the apostles to the present hour: and to have deceived Christians as a point confessedly of supreme importance, the very God whom they were to adore. Ask yourself whether it be possible that, when the Jewish Scriptures had been uninterruptedly directing their whole force for more then fifteen hundred years to effect the extermination of all idolatrous worship; the Christian Scriptures, deriving their authority from the same divine source, should come forth abounding in expressions precisely fitted, on the present supposition, to re-establish idolatrous worship: for if Christ be not God, to worship him, or to pay to him any species of divine honour, is idolatry. Ask yourself whether it be possible that God, who, when alluding to idolatry, continually characterises himself as "a jealous God,"[v] who solemnly affirms "I am the Lord: and my glory "will I not give to another;"[w] would himself address his Son in these terms, "Thy throne, O God, is for "ever and ever;[x] if that Son were not a partaker of his godhead. Are these difficulties less embarrassing than those which attend the true doctrine, the divinity of our Redeemer? For, in the second place, what are the difficulties, which that doctrine involves? You may sum them up in these few words. You feel that it is, in your apprehension, hard, perhaps you will choose to say impossible, to reconcile the divinity of Christ with that great scriptural truth, the unity of God. The unity of God is unquestionably a great scriptural truth: and the divinity of Christ, if it were irreconcilable with that truth, would be no true doctrine. But dare you aver, that the divinity of Christ is irreconcilable with the unity of God? Dare you, who experience in your own person the intimate union of

[v] See Exod. xx. 5. xxxiv. 14. Deut. iv. 24. and many other passages.

[w] Isaiah, xlii. 8. and see xlviii. 11. 12.

[x] Heb. i. 8.

two substances of opposite natures, the one spiritual, the other corporeal; dare you presume, in the face of this experience, to assert that it is impossible for two kindred spiritual beings to be united in the same godhead? Dare you, the child of a day, affect to measure with the scanty span of your ignorance the secrets of eternal infinity? Dare you, who cannot examine the smallest of your Creator's works without finding yourself surrounded with inexplicable difficulties; dare you take upon you to define what is possible and what is not possible in the divine nature of Him who made you and all things? If you claim such high prerogatives for your reason, act consistently with that reason: forbear authoritatively to pronounce on subjects, which exceed the grasp of your comprehension; and humbly believe what he, who cannot lie, reveals concerning himself. The mode of union existing in the godhead between the Father and the Son is unknown, and incomprehensible to you. Be it so. Seek not to explain the mode, because God had not unfolded it to man: but acknowledge the union, because God hath declared it in the Scriptures.

If your mind remains unsatisfied, let me still request your deliberate attention. Reflect that difficulties respecting moral possibilities, difficulties equally great with those which you conceive to belong to the doctrine of the Trinity, and arising from the same cause, the limited nature of your faculties; attend you during the investigation of the plainest attributes of God. Take his eternity for an example. What maxim are you less disposed to call controvertible, than this; that nothing can take place without a cause? What can be more staggering, more overwhelming to reason, than that a being should exist without a beginning, without a cause? If you say that God is the cause of his own existence, you multiply words only to leave the subject more obscure. For if you mean this explanation to remove the difficulty, it must imply these palpable and impious absurdities: that the Supreme Being once did not exist; and, before he existed, operated to produce his existence. Begin now to reason in another line: infer from your

own existence and that of the universe, the necessity of the existence of a Creator: and you find that this train of argument necessarily leads you on to perceive that a being must have existed for ever, without beginning, and without cause. But observe, for this is at present the material point, that although it obliges you to acknowledge this truth, it does not in the smallest degree lessen or remove the original difficulties with which you found it accompanied. It takes no notice of them. It leaves them untouched; precisely as they were. The truth remains in itself as staggering and overwhelming as before. You see that it is undeniably a truth: but are utterly incapable of comprehending the mode of the fact. You clearly perceive, however, that what your reason is incapable of comprehending, what it is at first disposed to reject as irreconcilable with some undeniable proposition, may on other grounds of reasoning be proved to your complete satisfaction indisputably certain, even while your original difficulty remains undiminished and untouched. Apply this example to the case of the Trinity. And if you still feel the continuance of the difficulties as to the mode of the union, which at first inclined you presumptuously to regard the existence of three divine persons (for to the divinity of the Holy Spirit all the foregoing reasoning respecting the divinity of Christ may be transferred) as inconsistent with the unity of the godhead: remember that on other grounds of reasoning, namely on the declarations of the inspired Scriptures, you still have indisputable warrant for believing that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are God, and One God.

But all these glories were laid aside, voluntarily laid aside. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."*—"Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to "be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, "and took upon him the form of a servant, and was "made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."†—"He "took not on him the nature of angels, but (that of) the

* John i. 14. † Philip ii. 6—8.

"seed of Abraham; and was in all things made like "unto his brethren: and was in all points tempted like "as we are, yet without sin."* When he became partaker of flesh and blood, his life was marked by humiliation and sufferings. He was born in the lowest station. His mother, indeed, conformably to the prophecies concerning the Messiah, was a descendant of the royal house of David. But it is evident to what obscurity and poverty that branch of the race of David was reduced, from the circumstance of the Virgin Mary being espoused to Joseph, who was a carpenter. The very place of our Saviour's birth was a stable; there being no room for his mother and Joseph in the inn. In a very short time he was hurried into Egypt, that he might escape the jealous fury of Herod. When, after a youth passed in obscurity, he entered upon his public ministry, he was employed in constant and laborious journeyings and preachings in towns, in villages, in the wilderness, without leisure, relaxation, or a settled home. The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests: but the Lord of all things, become the son of man, had not where to lay his head.† Though he was continually occupied in doing good to men, healing all kinds of bodily diseases, and teaching the way to everlasting happiness; he met with unceasing opposition, reproaches, calumny, and persecution; and was repeatedly compelled to deliver himself by a miracle from attempts made upon his life. This course of unjust treatment he well knew to be preparing the way for usage still more iniquitous and cruel. Again and again he forewarned his disciples of the death that awaited him; and the nearer his death approached, the more frequently did he recal it to their remembrance. On the evening at the close of which he was seized by his enemies, having retired to the garden of Gethsemane with his disciples, he underwent the most bitter agony at the prospect of the sufferings which he was about to undergo; and prayed in the anguish of his soul, that, if it were possible, possible consistently with the full attainment of those objects for the accomplishment of which he took human nature upon

* Heb. ii. 16, 17. iv. 15. † Mat. viii. 20.

himself, the bitter cup might pass from him without his drinking of it. Yet he added with perfect resignation to the good pleasure of his Father; "nevertheless, not "my will, but thine, be done!" The circumstances which then took place were such as were peculiarly calculated to augment the weight of his afflictions. He was betrayed into the hands of his murderers by one of his own disciples. When he was seized, all his other disciples forsook him and fled. And though Peter afterwards followed him to the house of the High Priest; it was not to comfort, but to deny him three times, deliberately, and with oaths. When he was brought to trial, though the false witnesses, suborned to accuse him, could prove none of the charges which they advanced; though Pilate, the Roman governor, declared himself convinced of his innocence, and shewed a strong desire to set him at liberty; the malice and violence of his enemies prevailed. Exposed to the grossest and the most savage insults, scourged, derided, smitten, crowned with thorns, he was nailed by his hands and feet to the cross: while the triumphant scoffs of his persecutors continued, and even one of the two malefactors, crucified together with him, joined in reviling him. On that cross, however, it was not necessary that he should linger in anguish. The past misery was all that his glorious undertaking exacted of him. He therefore cried with a loud voice, "It is finished:"* and while the earth quaked and the rocks were rent, and the beholders stood aghast with astonishment and terror, bowed his head and gave up the ghost.

Such were, in few words, the sufferings of Jesus Christ. They were sufferings so extraordinary in their nature and extent, and sustained by one, who was not only free from all taint of sin, but of such transcendant dignity and power; that the cause for which they were endured must necessarily have been of unparalleled importance. What was that cause? You will say, and you will say truly, that one great purpose, for the attainment of which Jesus Christ came in the flesh, was to communicate to men a clearer knowledge of their duty

* John, xix. 30.

to God, and to set before them in his own conduct a pattern of practical holiness. Without all doubt this is one of the momentous purposes for which the Son of God became man. But was this the only purpose? Consider, before we examine further what the Scriptures teach us on the subject, how improbable it seems that this should have been the only purpose. Consider the methods which the Almighty on former occasions had seen fit in his wisdom and goodness to adopt. When the Jewish religion was established by revelation from heaven; God did not judge it necessary to send down to earth a messenger higher than men and angels. He deemed it sufficient to employ a mere prophet, Moses, for that purpose. When the Jews had grievously departed from the holy worship which they had been commanded to observe: Elijah, and other mere prophets, were the ministers whom God sent forth to reclaim them. It is not unreasonable, therefore, humbly to conclude that if, at the time when Christianity was first revealed, the only purpose of the Deity had been to instruct men in a purer mode of worship, and a more holy course of life; he might probably have employed some prophet to execute the commission, instead of his own Son, the Lord of glory. Again; if no other purpose than that which has been specified was to be accomplished by the coming of Christ in the flesh; why was it ordained that he must be put to death, and even to the most cruel and ignominious death, that of the cross? When the Deity appointed prophets in ancient times to preach a new religion, or to recal men from wickedness and idolatry; he did not think it requisite that those prophets should be put to death, either as a proof of the truth of all that they pronounced in his name, or as an example of patient constancy and obedience to their followers. Moses died a natural death, in peace, full in years and of honour. Elijah, instead of being cut off by his enemies, was blessed with the privilege of not dying at all; and was taken up alive into heaven. There appears then very strong reason to conclude, before we consult the Scriptures further, that God would not have sent his own Son as man upon earth, and sent him to be "a man of

" sorrows, and acquainted with grief,"*a* to be betrayed, to be scourged, to be derided, to be crucified: if some other most important end, beyond that of giving to men directions for their future conduct, had not been thus, perhaps thus only, to be attained. What then was that other end for the attainment of which Christ came and suffered? Turn to the sacred volume: " surely he hath " borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. " He was " wounded for our transgressions: he was bruised for " our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace (by " which our peace with God was effected) was upon " him: by his stripes we are healed. All we, like " sheep, have gone astray; and the Lord hath laid on " on him the iniquity of us all."*b* His soul was made " an offering for sin: for the transgression of my peo- " ple was he striken."*c* Such is the language of the Old Testament, prophetically describing the then future sacrifice of the Messiah as already past. Consult the New Testament, and acknowledge the prediction verified. Christ is " the Lamb of God, which taketh away " the sin of the world."*d* He is " the good shepherd," that came to " lay down his life for the sheep, to give " his life a ransom for many."*e*—" Christ, our passo- " ver, is sacrificed for us."*f*—" Christ hath loved us; " and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice " unto God.*g* We were reconciled to God by the " death of his son; by whom we have now received " the atonement"*h*—" We have redemption through " his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins."*i*—" He " has reconciled us to God, having made peace through " the blood of his cross."*k*—God made him, who knew no sin, to be " sin (a sin-offering) for us, that we might " be made the righteousness of God in him:*l* who his own " self bare our sins in his own body on the tree."*m* " Christ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he " might bring us to God."*n*—" he washed us from our " sins in his own blood."*o*—" We were redeemed with

a Isaiah, liii. 3, *b* Isaiah, liii. 4—6. *c* Ibid. 8, 10. *d* John, i. 29.
e John, x. 15. Mat. x. 28. *f* 1 Cor. v. 7. *g* Ephes. v. 2.
h Rom. v. 10, 11. *i* Colos. i. 14. *k* Colos. i. 20. *l* 2 Cor. v. 21.
m 1 Pet. ii. 24. *n* Ibid. iii. 18. *o* Rev. i. 5.

"the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without "blemish and without spot."* He it is "whom God "hath sent forth to be a propitiation through faith in "his blood."†—"He hath appeared, to put away sin "by the sacrifice of himself. By his own blood he hath "obtained eternal redemption for us. We are sancti-"fied with his blood."‡ But is it clear that you, that I, may have an interest in these blessings? Did Christ suffer and make atonement for all mankind; or but for a part of the human race? These are momentous questions. For if Christ died only for a part of the human race, he may not have died for you or for me. But let us take comfort. Our God, the God of mercy, is no respecter of persons. Hear his gracious language long before the coming of the Redeemer. "Have I any plea-"sure that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God? "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the "death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his "way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil way; "why will ye die."§ Hear the voice of the same God proclaiming by the inspired writers of the New Testament the universality of the offer of salvation through Christ. "The Lord is not willing that any should pe-"rish; but that all should come to repentance."‖—"God our Saviour will have all men to be saved."¶—"Christ gave himself a ransom for all."**—"Jesus Christ "the righteous is the propitiation for our sins: and not "for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole "world."†† Hear the gracious invitation of Christ himself. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are hea-"vy laden; and I will give you rest."‡‡ Hear his explicit declaration: "The Son of Man must be lifted up (on the Cross,) "that whosoever believeth in him "should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so "loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish,

* 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. † Rom. iii. 25. ‡ Heb. ix. 12. 26. xiii. 12. Ezek. xviii. 23. xxxiii. 11. ‖ 2 Pet. iii. 9. ¶ 1 Tim. ii. 3, 4. ** 1 Tim. ii. 6. †† 1 John, ii. 12. ‡‡ Matt. xi. 28.

"but have everlasting life."* Hear his final commission, on his departure from earth, to his disciples. "Go "ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every "creature. He that believeth, and is baptized shall be "saved."† But perhaps there may be crimes of too deep a dye to be washed away by the blood of Christ? Fear not: "The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all "sin."‡ In return for the meritorious obedience and sufferings of our blessed Saviour, "the Lord from hea-"ven," when he appeared as the Son of Man, "the "Second Adam,"§ to repair the evils brought upon the human race by the first; for "as in Adam all die, even "so in Christ shall all be made alive;"‖ and to bruise the head of the serpent, the devil, who by corrupting our first parents had entailed sin and misery on a ruined world; his Heavenly Father exalted him, in his human nature, to his own right-hand, and placed him at the head of the universe. "Christ Jesus, being found "in fashion as a man," humbled himself; "and be-"came obedient unto death even the death of the cross. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him; and "given him a name which is above every name: that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things "in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the "earth: and that every tongue should confess that Je-"sus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.¶ "God raised him from the dead, and set him at his own "right-hand in the heavenly places, far above all prin-"cipality, and power, and might, and dominion, and "every name that is named not only in this world, but "in that which is to come: and hath put all things un-"der his feet: and given him to be head over all things "to the church."** The apostle, when he affirms that "the Saviour, the Lord Jesus shall change our vile body "that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body," carries the mind forward to his omnipotence; "accord-"ing to the working whereby he is able to subdue even

* John, iii. 15. 16. † Mark, xvi. 15, 16. ‡ 1 John, i. vii.
§ 1 Cor. xv. 47. ‖ 1 Cor. xv. 22. ¶ Philip. ii. 5—10.
** Ephes. i. 20—22. and see Coloss. i. 18. ii. 10.

"all things to himself."* Hear our Saviour's own words: "All things are delivered unto me of my Fa-"ther.† All power is given unto me, in heaven and in "earth."‡ In this state of supreme exaltation the church, which he purchased with his blood, is still the object of his affectionate and unremitting care. "Lo, I "am with you always, even unto the end of the world.§ "Where two or three are gathered together in my "name, there am I in the midst of them."‖ At this hour he pleads his merits as an atonement for the continual transgressions to which even his faithful servants are exposed during their state of probation. "He is "entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the pre-"sence of God for us.¶ If any man sin, we have an "advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.** "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come "unto God by him: seeing he ever liveth to make in-"tercession for them."†† This mediatorial kingdom of Christ in his human nature shall continue to the consummation of all things. "He must reign, till he shall "have put down all rule, and all authority, and power; "till he hath put all enemies under his feet. And when "all things shall be subdued unto him;" when he shall have raised the dead, and pronounced judgment on the whole human race, on the fallen angels, and on Satan himself;‡‡ "then shall the Son deliver up the kingdom "to God, even the Father: then shall the Son also "himself," as man, be subject unto him that put all "things under him, that God may be all in all."§§

Such is the dispensation of redemption through Jesus Christ, the Son of God. What are the impressions with which it fills your heart? Are you overwhelmed with the magnitude of the mercy; and ready to cry out in astonishment with the Psalmist, "Lord, what is man "that thou hast such respect unto him; and the son "of man, that thou so regardest him?‖‖ The thoughts "of God are not as our thoughts; nor his ways as our

* Philip. iii. 21. † Matt. xi. 27. ‡ Matt. xxviii. 18.
§ Matt. xxviii. 20. ‖ Matt. xviii. 20. ¶ Heb. ix. 24.
** 1 John, ii. 1. †† Heb. vii. 25. ‡‡ 2 Pet. ii. 4.
§§ Jude, 6. Rev. xx. 2. 10. ‖‖ Psalm viii. 4.

"ways:"* the mercy vast as it is, is not two great for the God of Mercy. Are you surprised that you cannot fathom the depths of this mysterious plan for the salvation of mankind? It is a mystery into which the very "angels desired to look."† Or are you proudly disposed, with presumptuous and profane reasoners, to cavil at the inscrutable councils of Infinite Goodness: to question the justice of God in permitting his guiltless Son to suffer for sinful man—while yet his Son voluntarily took the sufferings upon himself—or to contend that human transgressions might have been freely forgiven without an atonement—while yet it is impossible for you to know that they could thus have been forgiven freely in consistence with the attributes of God; and while it seems highly probable, as far as our limited faculties can presume to conjecture, that such an example of impunity would have been an encouragement to disobedience throughout the universe? Leave to God "the secret things which belong to him:"‡ and accept with humble thanksgiving the stupendous blessing which he has revealed. Remember too that this blessing is, as to yourself, conditional. Salvation through Christ is offered to you, not forced upon you. It is promised to you only on terms of entire submission to him and to his laws. If you love that Saviour who has loved you; if you give yourself to him, who gave himself for you; he will reward you with everlasting glory. "But how shall you escape, if you neglect so great "salvation?"§ There is salvation in no other: "there is no other name under heaven given among men, "whereby we must be saved." If Christ affirmed to his disciples, when he charged them to preach the Gospel to every creature, "He who believeth, and is bap-"tized, shall be saved:"‖ he added, in the same sentence, "He who believed not shall be damned."¶ To you the Gospel is preached: and the alternative is set before you, that you may make your choice. If you reject the Gospel; or if speculatively believing its truth

* Isaiah, lv. 8, 9. † 1 Pet. i. 12. ‡ Deut. xxix 29.
§ Heb. ii. 3. ‖ Acts, iv. 12. ¶ Mark, xvi. 15, 16

you lead the life of one who disbelieves it; if you follow the maxims and practices of a wicked world, instead of the commandments and the example of Christ; you have already read your doom.

V. But how, you exclaim, is a being like man, by nature prone to evil and disinclined to good; surrounded with powerful and unceasing temptations; and assailed by the unremitted malice of the same subtle adversary, who ensnared the inhabitants of Paradise: how is such a being so circumstanced, to fulfil the conditions, on the performance of which his salvation is to depend? This question leads to the disclosure of another blessing purchased for you by your Redeemer. He has purchased for you the assistance of the Holy Spirit, to enable you to do what by nature you cannot do.

The Holy Ghost is one of the persons of the Trinity; partaking of the Godhead with the Father and the Son, yet in some respects, unexplained and probably inexplicable to man, distinct from each. It has already been shewn that the mysteriousness of this doctrine affords not any argument for hesitating to receive it, if plainly revealed in the Scriptures. Many are the proofs which the Scriptures furnish of the Divinity and the distinct personality of the Holy Ghost. In the form of baptism prescribed by our Saviour for all nations,*a* His name is united with that of the Father and of the Son. He is again united with them in the apostolical benediction.*b* To lie to him is to lie unto God.*c* To despise him is to despise God.*d* To blaspheme him is an unpardonable sin; and the only unpardonable sin.*e* He is denominated the Spirit;*f* the Spirit of God;*g* the Spirit of Christ;*h* the Spirit of Truth;*i*

a Matt. xxviii. 19. *b* 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

c Acts, v. 3, 4. 9. *d* 1 Thes. iv. 8.

e Mat. xii. 31, 32. Mark, iii. 28. 29. Luke, xii, 10. The sin is probably unpardonable, as not to be followed by repentance: for they who blaspheme the Holy Ghost, blaspheme that Spirit who alone worketh repentance.

f Acts, xi. 12. xvi. 7. 1 John, v. 6. *g* Rom. viii. 9.

h Gal. iv. 6. 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. compared with 1 Pet. i. 21.

i John, xiv. 17. xv. 26. and see 1 John, v. 6.

the Eternal Spirit;[k] the Comforter.[l] He is said to search all things, even the deep things of God.[m] His distinct agency is frequently specified in the Scriptures. "The Spirit said unto Philip; Go near, and join thy-"self to his chariot:"[n] and afterwards "the Spirit of "the Lord caught away Philip," and conveyed him to Azotus. Unto St. Peter "the Spirit said, Behold three "men seek thee: arise therefore and get thee down, "and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have "sent them."—"The Spirit bade me go with them,"[o] saith Peter, reciting the same event. "The Holy Ghost "said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work "whereunto I have called them."[p] Afterwards, when Paul with Timothy "had gone through Phrygia and the "region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy "Ghost to preach the word in Asia; after they were "come to Mysia they assayed to go into Bithynia: "but the Spirit suffered them not."[q]—"Feed the "church of God," saith the same apostle, "over which "the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers."[r] He it was who spake by the mouth of the ancient prophets:[s] and who revealed to Simeon that he should not die, until he had seen the Messiah.[t] He visibly descended in a bodily shape on Jesus Christ, when baptized:[u] and was given without measure to the Son of God now become man.[v] Our Saviour promised to his disciples that after his own departure, he would send to them from the Father, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, to teach them all things, to shew them things to come, to bring to their remembrance whatsoever Christ had said to them, to guide them into all truth, to endue them with power from on high, and to enable them to

k Heb. ix. 14. *l* John, xiv. 16. 26. xv. 26. xvi. 7.
m 1 Cor. ii. 10. *n* Acts, viii. 29. 39.
o Acts, x. 19. 20. xi. 12. *p* Acts, xiii. 2.
q Acts, xvi. 6, 7. *r* Acts, xxix. 28.
s Mark, xii. 16. Acts i. 16. xxi. 11. xxviii. 25. 2 Pet. i. 21. Heb. iii. 7. *t* Luke ii. 26. *u* Luke iii. 22.
v John iii. 34.

make good their cause against worldly opposition.*w* These promises were faithfully accomplished. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles, and ever afterwards abode with them.*x* He empowered them to speak various languages previously unknown to them; to attain to extraordinary degrees of wisdom, of knowledge, and of faith; to prophecy; to heal diseases; to perform many other signal miracles; and by imposition of hands to convey to others the gifts of the Spirit.*y* These miraculous powers and endowments were calculated for the infancy of the Christian church. They qualified the apostles to preach the religion of Christ to the inhabitants of far distant countries; and in every country to produce indisputable credentials that they came ambassadors from God.*z* In process of time, when Christianity had taken such firm root in different parts of the world, that it no longer needed for its support and progress such visible and wonderful interpositions of Divine power, they were gradually withdrawn. The influence of the Holy Ghost has since continued to be exercised principally in another most important office, an office in which it was also employed no less actively in the days of the apostles, that of enlightening and purifying the heart of each particular Christian. It is "God that worketh "in us both to will and to do *a* "that which is right: "and he worketh by the agency of the Holy Ghost. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he "cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*b* "We are to be "saved by the renewing of the Holy Ghost."*c* By him we are to be changed into the image of Christ. *d* "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," are enumerated by the apostle as "the fruits of the Spirit;" in opposition to the list of the most flagitious crimes, which he

w John xiv. 26. xv. 26. xvi. 7, 13. Matt. x. 18—20. Mark xiii. 11. Luke xii. 11, 12. xxi. 12—15. xxiv. 49. Acts i. 8.

x John xiv. 16. *y* Acts ii. 4. viii. 17. Rom. xv. 19. 1 Cor. xii. 4. &c. *z* 2 Cor. v. 20. *a* Phil. ii. 13.

b John iii. 5. *c* Tit. iii. 5. *d* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

denominates "the works of the flesh," the works to which the corrupt nature of man disposeth him: with respect to which latter works he solemnly affirms, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God *e* But have we full assurance that the assistance of the Holy Ghost, essential as it is to our salvation, will be afforded? Our Saviour has anticipated the question. "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall "find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you. If ye, "being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your chil- "dren: how much more shall your Heavenly Father "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him *f*?" How then may his blessed help be secured? By fervent prayer to God, and by earnest endeavours to "grow in grace: *g* to improve day by day in piety and good works. Think not that the Divine assistance will be bestowed unasked, unsought, unsolicited. Nor think that it will be bestowed that it may supersede the necessity of your own exertions, that it may enable you to lead a careless life, without labouring to "work out your salvation with "fear and trembling." *h* Ask in the name of Jesus Christ for the sanctifying aid of Divine grace; and it will not be withheld; study to improve by that which is bestowed, and more will be granted. But "grieve not" by transgression the "Holy Spirit of God;" *i* lest you "be abandoned to yourself, and given over to a repro- "bate mind *k*."

e Gal. v. 18—23. *f* Luke, xi. 9. 13. *g* 2 Pet. iii. 18.
h Philip. ii. 12. *i* Ephes. iv. 30. *k* Rom. i. 28.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE CHARACTER OF JESUS CHRIST.

THE great pattern which a Christian is uniformly to propose for his imitation, is the character of his Saviour. "Learn of me; for I am meek and "lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your "souls."*a*—"I have given you an example, that ye "should do as I have done"*b*—'Christ suffered for "us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his "steps."*c*—"Be like minded one towards another, "according to the example of Christ Jesus."*d*—"Let "that mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus."*e* When our Lord laid aside the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, and took human nature upon him; "he was made like unto his bre-"thren, and was in all points tempted like as we are."*f* Hence he is repeatedly styled in the Scriptures the Son of Man, the man Christ Jesus; and is described as growing not in stature only, but in wisdom, and in favour with God. Hence too there appears an obvious reason for those expressions, in which he speaks of his inferiority to his Father, and his ignorance of a part of the divine councils:*g* expressions which, but for this consideration, might have been deemed inconsistent with other expressions of his own,*h* and with the doctrine of his divinity. Regarding him then in the state in which he manifested himself in the flesh, as a man, conversant with men, encompassed with the infirmities and subject to the pains and sorrows of mortality; let us investigate, with some degree of detail, the example which he has left for our imitation.

a Matt. xi. 29. *b* John, xiii. 15. *c* 1 Pet. ii. 21.
d Rom. xv. 5. in the marginal translation. *e* Philip. ii. 5.
f John, xvii. 5. Heb. ii 17. iv. 15. *g* John, xiv. 28. Mark, xiii. 32. *h* John, x. 15. 30.

The first duty required of men is piety towards God. The fervent piety of our Lord was his earliest and most prominent distinction. At the age of twelve years he left his mother and Joseph, and repaired to the Temple at Jerusalem; where he was found by them in the midst of the Jewish teachers, hearing them, and asking them questions. In answer to the Virgin Mary, whose address to him implied considerable surprise, he said, "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I "must be about my Father's business;"* employed in promoting the object for which I came into the world, the glory of my Heavenly Father? When occupied in the labours of his public ministry, we find that it was his custom regularly to attend the synagogues, the established places of worship, on the Sabbath, and to explain to the people the word of God.† On every occasion he spoke with the utmost reverence of the Holy Scriptures. He exhorted his hearers to read and search them out: he interpreted such parts as related to himself: he affirmed that they could not be broken; that not one circumstance recorded therein should pass away without being fulfilled. In one of his parables he speaks in the severest terms of those who despised or neglected the scriptures; declaring that if the persons whom he described would not hear and obey Moses and the prophets, neither would they be convinced though one should be even raised from the dead for their conversion. The rejection of Christianity by the Jews after his own resurrection practically confirmed the truth of this declaration. In all his actions he shewed the warmest zeal for the glory of God. When he came into the Temple, and saw the outward court crowded with people who sold oxen, sheep and doves for sacrifices; and with money-changers, who supplied such as wanted Jewish money in exchange for foreign coin; he drove them from the place with indignation: and told them that the house of God was to be a house of prayer; but that they had made it a den of thieves. All his own mighty works, his doctrines, his sufferings, and his resurrection, he ascribed to the glory of God his

* Luke ii. 48, &c. † Luke iv. 16.

Father. To him he habitually gave thanks on partaking or distributing of food. To him he prayed continually, at all seasons, sometimes alone, at other times with his disciples. He encouraged them to be earnest and constant in offering their petitions; and at their request drew up a form of prayer, admirable alike for piety, simplicity, energy, wisdom and comprehensiveness, to direct and assist their devotions. In all things he submitted himself wholly to the will of God. And in his last agony, when he prayed with such fervency that his Father would remove from him, if it were possible, the bitter cup; he closed his supplication with these words: "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be "done." Thus completely did our Blessed Saviour in all things obey the first "and great commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, "and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with "all thy strength."*

Let us proceed to the second great commandment, which Christ pronounces to be "like unto the first: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."† Of this command love, in the language of Scripture, that is to say, perfect benevolence necessarily including perfect justice, is the fulfilment.x "He that loveth ano-"ther hath fulfilled the law. For this; thou shalt not "commit adultery; thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not "steal; thou shalt not bear false witness; thou shalt "not covet; and if there be any other commandment, "it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love "worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is "the fulfilling of the law."‡ Christ, by laying aside the majesty of his Divine Nature, and suffering upon the cross for our sins, gave a proof of love towards mankind, so wonderful as to exceed the grasp of the most capacious understanding, and the acknowledgments of the warmest gratitude. Well do the Scriptures attempt, and thy can do no more than attempt, to illustrate the transcendent love of Christ towards a depraved

* Matt. xxii. 37, 38. Mark, xii. 30. † Mark xii. 39.
‡ Rom. xiii. 8—10

and guilty world, by contrasting his conduct with the strongest examples of human affection. "Greater "love hath no man than this; that a man lay down "his life for his friends. Scarcely for a righteous man "will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some "would even dare to die. But while we were yet sin-"ners, and enemies, Christ died for us."*—During his abode upon earth, he was continually occupied in works of kindness and compassion. In the words of the apostle, "he went about doing good." For the comfort of the soul, he preached forgiveness of sins through his own death; and pointed out the sure way to the kingdom of God. For the relief of the body, he healed all kinds of diseases. He made the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the lame to walk. He cleansed lepers, cast out evil spirits, raised the dead. Though in general he performed his miracles upon those persons who stood most in need of his assistance, and were also the most recommended to it by their faith: on some occasions he signalised his Divine mercy by bestowing benefits upon objects, whose unworthiness excluded them from any pretension to his favour. Speaking of the loving kindness of his Father, he describes him not as pouring out his mercies only upon righteous men; but as making his sun to shine on the evil as well as on the good; as sending rain on the just and on the unjust. The same description may be applied to himself. It is recorded of him that he frequently associated with "publicans and sinners," notwithstanding the odium which his condescension excited, labouring for their conversion. When the ten lepers requested that he would heal them, he immediately cleansed them all; though he knew beforehand that only one of them would acknowledge the kindness by returning to give thanks to God. His benevolence appears in a distinguished light from his steady discouragement of Jewish prejudices. At the well of Jacob, he revealed his Messiahship to a woman of Samaria; and abode two days in the city, delivering instructions to the in-

* John, xv. 13. Rom. v. 7—10. See also Coloss. i. 21, 22.

habitants. In his parable of the wounded traveller, the compassionate man was a Samaritan. Though in sending forth his twelve disciples to preach during his own life-time he forbade them to go into the countries of the Samaritans or of the Gentiles; he explicitly declared to them antecedently to his ascension, that they should be his witnesses not in Judea only, but in Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.* When two of his apostles, enraged at the Samaritans who would not receive himself and his disciples, because their journey was towards Jerusalem, were desirous of consuming the inhospitable city by fire from heaven; they experienced from their master a severe reprehension. He not only exhorted his followers to love each other but taught them a further lesson strange to their ears; "I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; pray for "them that despitefully use you and persecute you: "that ye may be the children of your Father which is "in Heaven." Still more forcibly to impress upon us the duty of benevolence, he constrains us to acknowledge in our daily prayers that we cannot desire the forgiveness of our sins, unless we forgive them that trespass against us; even them that trespass against us times without number.† For his own murderers he prayed while he was hanging upon the cross, at the time when he was enduring the utmost force of their torments. He solemnly assures us in language the most encouraging, that by whomsoever any act of kindness shall be rendered, any assistance administered, even if it be but a cup of cold water, to the lowest of his followers, from a spirit of Christian charity; he will look upon it and reward it as done to himself.‡ And now that he is ascended into Heaven, he still continues his affection for mankind. He guards and upholds his faithful servants; and guides and comforts them by the Spirit of his grace. By the same Spirit he labours to lead the wicked to repentance. He is at this hour

* Matt. x 5. Acts, i. 8. † Matt. xviii. 21, 22.
‡ Matt. x 42. xxv. 35—46.

making intercession for us at the right hand of God. And at the last day he will bestow everlasting glory and happiness on those, who shall have kept his commandments.

It is to pride that a very large portion of the impiety, the injustice, and the other crimes prevalent in the world may be traced. This detestable passion our Saviour opposes in the most decided and pointed manner:* and particularly by setting before us in his own conduct a perfect pattern of meekness and humility. Forbearing to recur to the unparalleled condescension which he evinced in "taking upon himself the form of "a servant in the place of that of God, and being made "in the likeness of men;" consider the station in which he chose to appear upon earth. He was born of lowly parentage, and laid in a manger. To this beginning his whole life was conformable. Though Lord of all things, he had not where to lay his head. He chose for his disciples not the powerful and the wealthy, not the wise and the learned, but individuals who were poor, ignorant, and despised. His conduct towards them was marked with singular mildness. He bore with their prejudices, their blindness, their unbelief; corrected their mistakes with gentleness; and explained to them in private with unwearied kindness the instructions which, when delivered in public, they had not understood. After his last supper before his crucifixion, with his own hands, and partly for the purpose of impressing on them a lesson of humility,† he washed their feet. "I have given you," said he on that occasion, "an example, that ye should do as I have done."—"He "came," he said, "not to be ministered unto, but him"self to minister unto others."‡ He was not elated by

* Yet in these days we hear people, who profess themselves Christians, applauding and inculcating what they call "a *proper* "pride."

† His conduct was also meant to be emblematical of the atonement which he was then about to make. See the whole account of the transaction, John, xiii. See also Luke, xxii. 24.

‡ Matt. x. 28.

the mighty wonders which he had performed: but was accustomed, after he had wrought a single miracle, to ascribe the glory to God. "Go," said he to the Gadarene, out of whom he had cast many devils, "retire "to thine own house, and shew how great things God "hath done unto thee."* By instances such as these, conclusive as to his own unassuming character, he has left a memorable admonition to every one who may be distinguished by superior powers of body or mind, to beware of being puffed up by these endowments, as though they were proofs of merit in the possessor: to ascribe to God with thankfulness and humility the glory of his own gifts: to pray that by the aid of his grace they may ever be applied to righteous purposes; and to remember that it is not the possession but the right application of abilities which is praise-worthy. Our Saviour commanded his disciples to guard under all circumstances against vain glory and ostentation; especially in the great Christian duties of prayer and of almsgiving. "When ye pray, be not as the hypocrites are: "for they love to pray in the corners of the streets, "that they may be seen of men. But thou, when thou "prayest, enter into thy closet: and when thou hast "shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret. "And when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a "trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, that they "may have glory of men. But when thou doest thine "alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand "doeth: that thine alms may be in secret." To these injunctions he subjoins this encouragement; "And your "Father, which seeth in secret shall reward you openly."† At the same time he explicitly teaches his followers, that they who perform these or other duties "to be seen of men," for the sake of human applause, "*have* their reward" in this world, and shall have no reward from "their Father who is in Heaven." The barren and fleeting breath of praise they may obtain from the world which they deceive: from God, whom they seek not to please and cannot delude, they have nothing to expect

* Luke, viii. 39. † Matt. iv. 1—6.

but the punishment due to their hyprocrisy. From the brief accounts of our Lord's conduct recorded in the Gospels we learn that the rules which he prescribed to his disciples were observed by himself. He set before them an example of constant attendance on public worship by regularly frequenting the synagogue: but weare repeatedly told of his retiring to a mountain, or into a desert, for the purposes of prayer. And it incidentally appears that he did not himself keep the purse, out of which alms were distributed to the poor; but committed the charge of it to Judas, who afterwards betrayed him.* One of the severest reproofs which he gave to the Jewish rulers is this: that they were ambitious of receiving honour one from another, and sought not the honour which cometh from God only: or, as it is expressed in another place by the evangelist, "they "loved the praise of men more than the praise of "God:" a disposition to which our Saviour ascribed as an almost necessary † consequence, their rejection of the Christian faith. In contradistinction to this spirit hear his own instructions. "Blessed are the meek. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Whoso- "ever shall humble himself as a little child, the same "shall be greatest in the kingdom of Heaven."‡ It has been shewn that his own actions were a faithful illustration of these precepts.

Our Saviour, whose abhorrence of all mixture of hypocrisy in acts of charity and of devotion has been recently noticed, stigmatises deceit in general, and in terms which imply extreme aversion. The falsehood of the Jews he pointedly reproves:§ and ascribes lies to the Devil as their author.‖ Of himself he says, "For "this cause came I into the world, that I might bear "witness to the truth."** "Because I tell you the truth, "you believe me not."††—"In my Father's house are "many mansions: if it were not so I would have told

* John, xii. 6. xiii. 29. † John, v. 44. xii. 43.
‡ Matt. v. 5. xviii. 4. Luke xiv. 12. § John, viii. 55.
‖ John, viii. 44. ** John, xviii. 37.
†† John, viii. 45.

you."* His veracity shone conspicuous under the hardest trials. He boldly rebuked and exposed the vices of the Jews, and discountenanced their darling prepossessions, though perfectly aware of the hatred and active enmity which he thus drew upon himself. The great purpose of his life was to establish his religion. Yet he never concealed from his followers the dangers and the persecutions which they would bring upon themselves from the powers of this world for professing his doctrine: but plainly forewarned them that they should be hated and despised of all men, that they should be driven from city to city, that they should be scourged, afflicted and put to death. In answer to Pilate's question, whether he was a king, he returned without hesitation the dangerous avowal, that he was † A clear and forcible admonition is this to us that no worldly advantage whatever will justify a deviation from the paths of truth.

Courage is a quality which obtains from mankind much higher praise than it deserves. In consequence of its obvious utility it is commonly permitted without enquiry to take its place among the virtues. But, considered in itself, it has no more an inherent title to be denominated a virtue than bodily strength or swiftness, or than wit, or reason. It is an instrument; and becomes the object of approbation or of disapprobation (for in this case as in others we transfer to the quality, according to the ordinary use of language, the praise or blame which belongs to the agent) solely according to principles upon which it is cultivated and employed.

* John, xiv. 2.

† John, xviii. 37. Pilate therefore said unto him, "Art thou "a king then?" Jesus answered "Thou sayest that I am a king:" that is, according to the idiom of the language, Thou sayest *rightly*, that I am a king. That this mode of expression was an acknowledgment and affirmation of the fact, concerning which the question enquired, is evident from Luke, xxii. 70, 71. and also from a comparison of Matt xxvi. 64. with Mark, xiv. 62. where the latter evangelist, instead of the words, "Thou hast said," in our Saviour's answer to the question whether he was the Son of God, substitutes the words, "I am."

When natural fortitude is cultivated by its possessor for the sake of promoting the glory of God and the welfare of his creatures; and is exerted in the face of danger for the purpose of promoting that glory and that welfare; we behold it with reverence. Such was the fortitude of Jesus Christ. In this sense his whole life was a demonstration of his fortitude. Several of those particulars in his conduct, which have been cited as proofs of his veracity, might be repeated as shining examples of religious magnanimity. As the hour of his death drew nigh, and afterwards when the fatal period had now overtaken him, the manifestations of his magnanimity were numerous and matchless. Though he knew the sufferings which awaited him at Jerusalem, he undauntedly went thither to the passover; foretelling to his disciples, who followed him in amazement and terror, every thing which was to befal him. At his last supper, when Judas was about to betray him, Jesus calmly said to him, "That which thou doest, do quickly." And when the traitor arose, and went out to conduct the soldiers that they might seize upon his Master, our Lord, who knew the reason of the departure of Judas, far from shewing any marks of fear, rejoiced at the approach of his death for the redemption of mankind; and said, "now is the Son of Man glorified; and God is glorified through him." In his agony in the garden, his human nature recoiled at the thoughts of the anguish which he was to undergo. But his most fervent prayers to be delivered, if it were possible consistently with the redemption of man, from that anguish, were accompanied with another, that the determination of his heavenly Father should take place. Let it be remembered that the death and sufferings of our Saviour were perfectly optional. All was in his own power. "I lay down my life: no man taketh it from "me; but I lay it down of myself."*—"Thinkest thou "that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall "presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then," added our Lord, "shall the "Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"† He

* John, x. 17, 18. † Matt. xxvi. 53, 54.

spoke ; and resigned himself to his enemies. When Peter denied him, Christ looked upon the fallen apostle with an eye of calm pity that pierced his heart. When smitten unjustly, he replied with magnanimous composure ; " If I have done evil, bear witness of the " evil : but if well, why smitest thou me ?" When derided and blasphemed before his crucifixion by the chief priests, scribes, and elders, by the Roman soldiery, and by Herod and his men of war ; when mocked and reviled, as he hung on the cross, by his enemies who exulted in the spectacle, and even by one of the malefactors crucified with him : he bore without emotion all that malice could devise ; and, as the prophet had foretold,* was like a lamb led to the slaughter, and opened not his mouth. A principal foundation of this holy fortitude in our Saviour was his conviction of the perfect innocence and righteousness of his life. Herein also he hath given us an example. He, who conscientiously and habitually endeavours to discharge, as the disciple of Christ, his duty to God and his neighbour, will receive such gracious assistance from above as will sustain him under all the distresses and afflictions of life, and fill him with hope and consolation on the bed of death.

By superficial enquirers it has been affirmed that the Gospel inculcates not either patriotism or friendship. And this false assertion has been brought forward as an objection to Christianity. That the Gospel mentions, not the term patriotism, nor commands under the shape of a formal precept the duties obviously comprehended in the term, is true. And he, who considers that the Jews regarded the love of their country as consisting in contempt and abhorrence of every other nation ; and that the Romans had converted the same principle into a pretext for subjugating the world to the dominion of Rome ; will not deem it wonderful that Christ was cautious of referring to the subject in direct precepts, which in consequence of the erroneous and mischievous opinions universally prevalent on the subject, would probably have been perverted or misunderstood. Yet while by teaching the equality of all nations in the sight

* Isaiah, liii. 7.

of God under the Gospel, and by inculcating on all men the duty of mutual benevolence as between brethren, he guarded against the mistakes and excesses to which patriotism, ill understood, has so often led: he taught both by precept and example the duty of loving our country. When in reply to an ensnaring inquiry he commanded the Jews to render unto Cesar the things which were Cesar's; he taught the first duty of patriotism, faithful obedience to lawful governors. Tribute he paid himself: and wrought a miracle that he might pay it.* The impending destruction of Jerusalem he lamented with the most affectionate concern, and with tears.† After having been obliged when he came to preach at Nazareth, the place where his youth was passed, to save his life by a miracle from the rage of his unbelieving countrymen; he returned in the following year to that city to renew his attempt at the risk of equal danger.‡ With respect to friendship, our Saviour confirmed its obligations by the sanction of his own example. His whole conduct to his disciples is a pattern of tender friendship. St. John is particularly distinguished as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Lazarus, who was not one of his disciples, is called by Christ himself his friend;§ and was one of the very few persons whom Christ raised from the dead. The affectionate regard of our Saviour to Lazarus and his sisters is beautifully expressed in the simple and touching language of the evangelist: "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus."‖ Consider, too, the remarkably kind attention of our Saviour towards Peter; who, after his shameful denial of his Lord, might justly apprehend that he should no longer be owned as a disciple. One of the angels who appeared to the women at the sepulchre on the morning of the resurrection, addressed them, conformably, we may presume, to the injunction of Christ, in these terms: "Depart, say to "his disciples, *and to Peter*, he goeth before you into

* Matt. xvii. 27. † Luke, xix. 41, 42.
‡ Luke, iv. 16—30. Matt. xiii. 54—58.
§ John, xi. 11. ‖ John. xi. 5.

"Galilee."* To St. Peter, and to him only, Christ shewed himself separately on the very day on which he arose. And afterwards, in the presence of six of his other disciples, he confirmed St. Peter, with marks of great confidence and distinction, in the apostolical office.† Finally, it was in the very act of blessing his disciples, that Christ ascended into heaven.‡

To the instances which have been produced of different virtues so gloriously exemplified in our Saviour's actions, many circumstances of his life evincing the same and other virtues might have been added.|| Far from wishing to exhaust, had it been possible to exhaust, the subject; my desire is to lead you to apply habitually to the sacred source, from which the preceding examples have been derived. Study the life of your Saviour, in his thoughts, words, and deeds. By prayer and exertion endeavour to be conformed to his image upon earth, as you hope to be conformed to it in heaven. Take for your guide, imitate as far as human weakness can imitate, this perfect pattern of perfect holiness. Far as you will ever remain short of it, labour still to approach nearer to it. The more earnestly you strive to be a faithful disciple of the Lord, the more of "that mind will "be in you, which was in Christ Jesus."§

* Mark, xvi. 7. † Luke, xxiv. 34. 1 Cor. xv. 5.

‡ John, xxi. 15, &c.

|| Luke, xxiv. 51. A very copious selection, accompained with many excellent observations, may be found in Archbishop Newcome's observations on our Lord's conduct.

§ Philipp. ii. 5.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY TO THE SUBVERSION OF THE WESTERN EMPIRE.

WHEN the divine author of Christianity had withdrawn his visible presence from the earth; his religion speedily experienced, according to his predictions, the encreasing enmity of a world whose practices it condemned, whose forms of worship it superseded. The pure gold was to be tried in the furnace of adversity. Scarcely had the apostles of Christ opened their commission, when a violent persecution, commencing with the martyrdom of Stephen, was raised "against "the church which was in Jerusalem: and they were "all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea "and Samaria, except the apostles."* This sudden dispersion of the Christians was rendered by the overruling hand of God the cause of an immediate and extensive diffusion of the true faith. "They which were "scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose "about Stephen, travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word."† The implacable hatred of the Jews remained undiminished. Some few years afterwards "Herod the king stretched forth "his hands to vex certain of the church: and he kill-"ed James, the brother of John, with the sword. And, "*because he saw it pleased the Jews*, he proceeded fur-"ther to take Peter also."‡ The virulence with which St. Paul was constantly opposed, and his life repeatedly attempted, by the Jews both in Judea and in distant countries, attested the rooted inveterancy with which that nation beheld Christianity and its preachers. From this enemy, however, the faith of Christ was in a great measure delivered by the victories of Titus.

But an enemy far more terrible remained; the idolatrous empire of Rome. From his throne in that capi-

* Acts, viii. 1. † Acts, xi. 19. ‡ Acts, xii. 1—3.

tal the emperor from time to time "stretched forth his "hands," not like Herod, merely to seize some unfortunate victims within the walls of the city where he dwelt; but "to vex and to kill," even in the utmost parts of the Roman world, those who conscientiously refused to burn incense to the gods of the pantheon. The persecutions which the Christians endured under the emperors are usually enumerated as ten: a number not very accurate, as it exceeds in amount the persecutions which were generally throughout the empire; and falls far short of those which raged at different times in particular provinces. Polytheism, limited by no bounds, was always ready to admit the reception of a new deity. The Romans had never scrupled to venerate the gods of the countries which they subdued: and the conquered countries had without hesitation united the gods of Rome with the original objects of their national worship. The Christians, therefore, who steadily refused all intercourse with idols, were regarded by the possessor of the throne of the Cæsars as rebels alike against the majesty of heaven and his own. They suffered also from being to a certain degree confounded, in the common apprehension, with the Jews; whom, in the words of Tacitus, the Romans, like the Persians and the Greeks, considered as "the most "despicable portion of their slaves." In addition to these causes of suspicion and abhorrence, they had to encounter the effect of the grossest and most malignant calumnies raised and spread abroad with unwearied activity of their Jewish and Pagan adversaries: calumnies partly calculated to rouse the imperial jealousy, by representing the Christians as the partisans of "another king, one Jesus;"* partly to render them objects of universal detestation, by describing them as addicted in secret to the most flagitious and horrible crimes, and as being the cause, by their impiety and vices, of every calamity, foreign or domestic, which afflicted the state. Hence arose the miseries which they sustained during nearly three centuries, sometimes

* Acts xvii. 17.

from the fury of legal vengeance, at other times, from the unauthorised but unrestrained outrages of the people.

The Christians, for such were evidently the persons whom Suetonius ignorantly denominates "the Jews "who raised continual tumults in Rome at the instiga-"tion of Christ," were expelled from that city by Clau-"dius."* With this indication of displeasure the emperor appears to have been satisfied. His successor Nero led the way in exacting sanguinary laws against the Christians; and in subjecting the wretched objects of his antipathy to the most cruel tortures. Suspected of being himself the author of the conflagration by which Rome was desolated, he laid the crime to the charge of the Christians; fixing the accusation, as Tacitus informs us, on them, in consequence of the general abhorrence in which they were held. He caused many of them to be crucified; to be devoured by wild beasts; or, being first wrapped in garments overspread with pitch and sulphur, to be fastened to stakes, and in that situation burned to illuminate his gardens by night.† With his death, A. D. 68, this persecution closed; and his edicts were annulled by the senate. About twenty-five years afterwards the flame broke out afresh with great violence under Domitian. It was, however, extinguished in a short time by the death of the tyrant; whose laws were abrogated by Nerva. But let it not be supposed that in these or other times, when there existed no law against Christians, they enjoyed a freedom from persecution. They were in fact subjected, throughout the empire to local persecutions even to death; whenever the populace, impelled by its own blind rage, or stimulated by an interested and idolatrous priesthood, clamoured for their destruction. On this head it will be sufficient to refer to the well-known letter of Pliny

* The fact probably was, that the Jews, stigmatised and oppressed might create some disturbances; and that the Christians, being regarded as a sect of Jews, were involved in the sentence of banishment.

† A. D. 64. See the account in Tacitus.

the younger, written by him while governor of Pontus and Bithynia, to Trajan: in which he appears weary at length of ordering to execution the numbers of persons brought before him on the charge, and on the single charge, of Christianity; and requests directions from the emperor for his future conduct. Trajan replies, that the Christians should not be officiously sought out: but that every person who should be accused and convicted of being a Christian, and should refuse to recant, must be put to death. Such was the treatment, which the Christians received from a prince celebrated, and justly celebrated, for general mildness and equity! What treatment then must they have experienced under such characters as commonly filled the imperial throne? Under, this edict, by which the situation of the Christians was certainly meliorated, many distinguished persons suffered martyrdom. Simeon, the bishop of Jerusalem, and son of Cleopas, was crucified: and Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, was flung, by the command of Trajan, to wild beasts in the amphitheatre.

In the reign of Adrian it speedily became the practice of the people in different provinces, to require during the celebration of their public games the destruction of the Christians: a demand with which the magistrates, fearing, or pretending to fear, that popular commotion would be the consequences of a refusal, frequently complied. Adrian at length issued an edict, commanding that the law of Trajan should be punctually obeyed.

In the reign of Antoninus Pius, the charge of Atheism and impiety reiterated against the Christians, and made the ground-work of many severities, was repelled by Justin Martyr in his "Apology" presented to the emperor; who, in consequence, confirmed the edict of Adrian. That law, which forbade the Christians to be sought after and punished unless they were guilty of some crime, being evaded afresh by their enemies, who interpreted Christianity itself to be a crime; the emperor interposed with equal justice and vigour to prevent the repetition of the cruel enormities, which under that subterfuge had been committed.

His successor Marcus Antoninus, without expressly revoking any existing law which afforded protection to the followers of Christ, disgraced himself by listening to the obloquy poured forth against them; and by edicts, in which he branded them as arrogant, obstinate, and wicked. In consequence of these proofs of the temper of the prince, a furious persecution of the Christians, A. D. 177, arose in many parts of the empire. Against a Christian, the most improbable accusation was instantly received; and great numbers, among whom was the aged Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, and the disciple of Saint John, suffered death in its most horrid forms. In some places Christianity was almost annihilated.

After an interval of comparative quiet, persecution raged again, at the end of the second century, and the beginning of the third, under Severus; who promulgated a law prohibiting any of his subjects from renouncing the religion of his ancestors for the Christian faith. The names of various eminent persons who suffered death under the operation of this edict are recorded by ecclesiastical historians. And in this persecution, no less than in others, the holy fortitude of the weaker sex under dangers and torments was as conspicuous as that of men.

From the death of Severus to the reign of Maximin, the Christians experienced no molestation; and occasionally enjoyed marks of favour from the intervening emperors. With the accession of Maximin their calamities recommenced. Dreading the resentment of the Christians, on account of his assassination of the younger Severus, whom they loved as their protector; he in the first instance seized and put to death the bishops, whom that emperor had received into the number of his intimate friends: and afterwards directed his vengeance against the leaders of the church with a degree of fury, which roused the enemies of the gospel to vent their rage in the most sanguinary manner against Christians of every description.

When Decius ascended the throne, A. D. 249, the horizon grew darker than ever; and such a storm fell

upon the Christians as they had never yet encountered. The emperor commanded the Prætors, on pain of death, to annihilate the Christian name, by extirpating all persons of that religion, or by torturing them until they should recant. During two years vast multitudes of Christians were put to death with circumstances of the most savage cruelty. Vast multitudes also, shuddering at the prospect of the lingering horrors which awaited them, "having no root, fell away;"* and screened themselves by apostacy or by dissimulation. Under the two succeeding emperors, Gallus and Volusianus, the persecution continued. The Christians were not only exposed in common with the rest of the empire to the general miseries of the age; among which famine and civil war, and a pestilence raging during fifteen years with unexampled havock, are painted in the strongest language by cotemporary writers; but they had also to bear the odium of being the cause of the public calamities, and to meet the vengeance which this accusation drew upon them.

Valerian, A. D. 254, becoming emperor, restored peace to the church during the first years of his reign. But when Macrianus, a bitter foe to the Christians, acquired the ascendant in his councils; he forbade their assemblies, and sent their bishops and principal teachers into exile. In consequence of another edict, a considerable number of Christians, among whom were Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, and Sixtus, bishop of Rome, were put to death. The persecution extended itself throughout the empire; and was accompanied with every possible aggravation of torture. Valerian was at length taken captive by the Persians: and the Christian world rested until the reign of Aurelian. In the year A. D. 275, this prince was meditating its destruction. But his plans were rendered abortive by his own death. And the church, though not exempt from occasional instances of oppression, was suffered to remain during the remainder of the century in tolerable tranquility.

* Luke, viii. 6. 13.

Early in the following century a persecution, more severe and bloody than any of those by which it had been preceded, assailed and almost overwhelmed the professors of Christianity. Diocletian, who governed a large portion of the Roman empire, which now began to be divided among several colleagues, was averse to sanguinary measures, and was originally no enemy to the Christians. But the calumnious artifices of the Pagan priests, who now saw additional cause of alarm, as Constantius Chlorus, one of the junior emperors, had renounced idolatry, were aided by the indefatigable solicitations of the other Caesar, Galerius, the son-in-law of Diocletion. The enemies of the true faith prevailed. An edict issued by Diocletian, A. D. 303, commanded all the churches to be demolished ; and the Christians to be deprived of their sacred writings, and of all their civil privileges and immunities : and occasioned the death of many individuals, who refused to surrender to the magistrates their religious books. A second edict ordered the imprisonment of all bishops and ministers of the Gospel. A third commanded that the most exquisite tortures should be employed to constrain these captives to lead the way in open apostacy. A fourth, promulgated A. D. 304, enjoined all magistrates to exercise these tortures upon all Christians, without distinction of rank or sex, for the purpose of forcing them to renounce their religion. These edicts, which extended over the whole of the Roman empire, with the exception of the province of Gaul, over which Constantius Chlorus presided, were executed with such active and unrelenting zeal, that the Christian faith was reduced to the extremity of distress. On the resignation of Diocletian, Galerius was advanced to the vacant dignity : and the sufferings of the Christians in the provinces under his controul were augmented. Soon afterwards, to his extreme mortification, the vacancy in the Imperial throne occasioned by the death of Constantius in Britain, A. D. 306, was filled by Constantine, son of the deceased emperor, and afterwards denominated the Great. Between Constantine and Galerius a civil war speedily commenced. At length the latter, weigh-

ed down to the grave by a horrid distemper accompanied with inconceivable anguish, commanded by a solemn edict, A. D. 311, the persecution against the Christians to cease. It was prolonged, however, by his successors Maximin and Licinius; and by Maxentius, who had made himself master of Italy and Africa. The war continuing, and Maxentius having perished in the Tiber, after a defeat from Constantine, A. D. 312; the victorious emperor immediately published, in conjunction with his colleague Licinius, who now saw the propriety or the necessity of acquiescence, an edict which accorded to the Christians the unmolested enjoyment of their religion. In the following year Maximin, being vanquished in a contest with Licinius, ended his own life by poison. And Licinius himself, who in the second of the civil wars which afterwards broke out between himself and Constantine, renewed his persecution of the Christians, and tortured and slew many of their bishops; being finally defeated and deposed, A. D. 324, left Constantine sole master of the Roman world.

The protection which this emperor granted to the Christians in the early part of his reign does not appear to have flowed from a decided conviction that their faith had an exclusive title to universal reception.* His humanity rendered him adverse to persecution. His sound understanding taught him the policy of cultivating the good will of his Christian subjects. And he appears to have entertained a favourable, though very indistinct, opinion of the claims of their religion to a divine origin. He regarded, however, the ancient religion of the empire as also true and useful; and professed an impartial desire that the old and the new faith should be equally exercised and honoured. But he who already knew somewhat of Christianity, and was desirous of knowing more, could not permanently continue in a state of indifference and suspence. By de-

* See Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, translated by Maclaine, 8vo. 1782, vol. i p. 321. To the same author I refer the inquirer into the controverted subject of the cross, said to have appeared to Constantine.

grees the emperor perceived that Christianity was true, and that every other religion must necessarily be false. Conformably to this conviction he earnestly exhorted all his subjects, by edicts issued A. D. 324, to receive and embrace the Gospel: and towards the close of his reign proceeded to exert the force of his authority for the abolition of idolatrous sacrifices, and for the destruction of Heathen temples. He died A. D. 337.

During the three centuries which had now elapsed since the death of our Saviour, Christianity, upheld by the promised assistance of its Divine Author, and rising with augmented force from the bloody conflicts of persecution, had overspread almost every part of the known world. From the unquestionable testimony of Irenæus it is manifest, that Christ was worshipped in the second century, and worshipped as one of the persons of the Godhead, almost throughout the whole East; and likewise among the Germans, the Spaniards, the Gauls, the Britons, and many other nations; among whom Tertullian specifies the Gætulians and the Moors. In the third century, the true faith prevailed more and more in the countries which it had previously reached: and was communicated to the inhabitants of other regions, among whom a tribe of Arabians converted by the labours of Origen, part of the Goths, who occupied Mæsia and Thrace, and part of the neighbouring tribes of Sarmatia, are particularly mentioned. Among the secondary causes which a late historian* enumerates as

* Mr. Gibbon. Youthful readers ought to be apprized that this historian, while continually labouring to undermine the faith of Christians occasionally by delusive argument, but more frequently by sneering reflections aimed at the doctrines or the professors of Christianity, adopts an insidious and dishonest custom very general among unbelievers; namely, that of affecting at proper intervals to use language, which seems to imply their belief in the religion they are endeavouring to subvert. If any persons, after reading the History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, should still suppose Mr. Gibbon to have been a believer in Christianity; the perusal of his posthumous works cannot fail to remove the mistake.

having conduced to the rapid progress of Christianity; causes to which it is plainly his intention adroitly to lead his readers to transfer the whole effect, to the exclusion of the first cause, and consequently to the exclusion of the truth of the religion; he specifies one, which undoubtedly existed and was considerably efficacious: the virtues of the early Christians.—"Let your light so shine before men," said Christ to his disciples, "that "they may see your good works and glorify your Father "which is in Heaven."* The "good works" of the early Christians, and the superiority in point of rectitude, manifest among the professors of the religion of Christ over surrounding Pagans, were undeniable. "Neither "in Parthia do the Christians, though Parthians, use "polygamy: nor in Persia, though Persians, do they "marry their own daughters: nor among the Bactri, "or Galli, do they violate the sanctity of marriage; nor "wherever they are, do they suffer themselves to be "overcome by ill constituted laws and manners."† Is this testimony suspicious because it is that of a friend, a Christian writer? Hear then the confession of enemies. When Pliny enquired of Trajan, in the letter already cited, concerning the future treatment of the Christians; what account does he give of them to the emperor? He relates that they were accustomed to assemble "on an appointed day to sing a hymn to Christ, as a "God: and to bind themselves by oath, that they "would not be guilty of theft, nor of robbery, nor of "adultery; that they would never falsify their word; "nor deny a pledge committed to them, when called "upon to return it." Lucian‡ says of the Christians, against whom he directed the utmost poignancy of his wit, "that their lawgiver, whom they worship, has "taught them that they are all brethren: that they have "an extreme contempt for all the things of this world: "that the expedition which they use when any of their "friends is known to be in trouble is inconceivable; and "that on such an occasion they spare nothing: that

* Matt. v. 16. † Bardesanes quoted by Eusebius.
‡ De Morte Peregrini.

"they despise death, and surrender themselves to suf-
"ferings." Notwithstanding the numerous instances of individuals, who "in time of persecution fell away;" who purchased by dissimulation, by unwarrantable compliances, or by open apostacy, an exemption from the cruelties to which a conscientious adherence to their religion would have exposed them: yet the promptitude with which multitudes encountered exile, confiscation, tortures, and death in the most dreadful shape, for the sake of their faith, made so strong an impression on their persecutors as to be deemed a characteristic feature of the Christians. Of this assertion the passage recently quoted from Lucian is a proof. Epictetus the stoic, and the emperor Marcus Aurelius, affirm the same thing. The former indeed ignorantly ascribes the intrepidity of Christians to madness or fashion; and the latter to obstinacy. The fact, however, they concur in attesting. We could not doubt, even if history were silent on the subject, that holy resignation and constancy evinced by the martyrs, and even by those of tender age and of the weaker sex, would not only animate their surviving friends to patient endurance, and to strenuous exertion for the diffusion of their faith; but would also draw the attention of many of the Pagan spectators, and even occasionally of the Pagan tormentors and executioners, to a religion by which such heroical resolution was inspired.

Among the obstacles which Christianity had to encounter in its progress, one which was no small impediment has not yet been noticed; the internal dissentions of Christians concerning points of religious doctrine or discipline. The apostle had said to his Corinthian converts, "I hear that there are divisions "among you; and I partly believe it: for there must "also be heresies among you; that they which are ap-
"proved may be made manifest."* The same species of probation by which St. Paul thought it probable that Providence would permit the Corinthians to be tried, was one of the tests by which the Supreme Being

* 1 Cor. 11. 19.

thought fit that the whole Christian church should be put to the proof. Scarcely had St. Peter and St. Paul "opened the door of faith to the Gentiles," before "cer- "tain men came down from Judea, and taught the "brethren, saying; except ye be circumcised after the "manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." And though the apostles and elders, assembled in council at Jerusalem, decidedly condemned these teachers and their doctrine: the Judaizers long continued to "trouble "and subvert the souls"* of the Gentile congregations. Other symptoms of a strong tendency in the Christians to form themselves into sects, and to arrange themselves under distinct leaders, soon appeared. Such dissentions were the chief occasion of St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians: in which he complains that "every one saith, I am of Paul; and I, of "Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I, of Christ."† At another time the same apostle speaks of teachers, "whose word will eat as doth a canker;" and mentions by name "Hymeneus and Philetus, who concerning the "truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past "already; and overthrown the faith of some."‡ Hymeneus had previously been characterised by St. Paul as having "put away a good conscience, and, made shipwreck concerning the faith:" whom, and Alexander, he adds "I have delivered unto Satan, that they "may learn not to blaspheme:"§ that is to say, as we collect from the import of the same phrase in another passage, the apostle had by his miraculous power in-

* Acts, xiv. 27. xv. 1—24. † 1 Cor. i. 12.

‡ 2 Tim. ii. 18. The doctrine of these false teachers appears to have been this; that the resurrection specified in the Gospels was not a real but a figurative resurrection; not a future existence, but a present reformation: a death unto sin and a rising again unto a life of righteousness, which, however, was not likely to be real or durable among those, who thus sophistically explained away the sanction of religion. Hymeneus had accordly loft his "good conscience" as well as his faith.

§ 1 Tim. i. 19. 20.

flicted upon them a bodily distemper, that being reclaimed by that signal chastisement, their souls might be saved in the day of the Lord.* Corrupt and selfish introducers of heresies are stigmatised with great severity by St. Peter and St. Jude;† the latter of which apostles represents them as even then "denying the "only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." Saint John, in his first and second Epistles, exerts himself with great earnestness in opposition to heritics who "denied the Father and the Son, and confessed not that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,"‡ denied the divinity and the incarnation of Christ; and commands them to be cut off from all communion and intercourse with the adherents to the true faith. In the book of Revelations, the Nicolaitans and other heretical sects are mentioned by Christ himself with extreme abhorrence, and are threatened with condign punishment.§ Among the sources of the wildest and most detestable heresies one of the most productive was the attachment secretly entertained by many of the Christian converts of the tenets, which they had formerly imbibed from the Oriental, or from the Grecian philosophy. "Beware," said St. Paul to the Colossians, "lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain "deceit; after the tradition of men, after the rudi"ments of the world, and not after Christ."‖ The admonition was most necessary. The philosophising Christians speedily began to represent their former tenets as substantially confirmed and illustrated by the Gospel; and to twist the Scriptures to such interpretations as might seem to uphold the assertion. Of all these philosophers the Orientalists, or Gnostics,¶ were the most extravagantly chimerical. In their hands

* 1 Cor. v. 4, 5. † 2 Pet. ii. 13—21. Jude, 3, 4, &c.

‡ 1 John, ii. 18—23. 2 John 7—11.

§ Rev. ii. 6. 14, 15, 16. 20—23.

‖ Colos. ii. 8. and observe the four preceding verses.

¶ The Gnostics derived their name from γνωσις, science or knowledge. For an account of their philosophy consult Mosheim, vol. i p. 133. &c.

Christianity evaporated into the most absurd and blasphemous mysticism. The divinity, the humanity, and the sufferings of Christ were alike denied by them: Moses and the Old Testament were alike regarded with utter abomination: the divine Author of the Jewish law, and the Creator of the world, was reviled as a subordinate being, and as a being intrinsically evil: the books of the New Testament were either totally renounced; or were curtailed, enlarged, corrupted, and perverted. It was in Egypt that these pestilent doctrines produced, in the second century, under various forms and teachers, the greatest mischief to the Christian church. Among the fanatical founders of other sects before the close of that century a principal place is due to Montanus, who affirmed himself to be sent with a Divine commission to exalt to a proper tone the weak and imperfect morality of the Gospel. Though he was separated, in consequence of his impious fanaticism, from the communion of the church, the austerity of his doctrine obtained to him the respect of many followers, among whom we lament to see the name of Tertullian. In the third century the philosophy of Plato advanced in credit among many of the learned Christians, and became a considerable snare to Origen and his disciples: who also encumbered the simplicity and clouded the light of the Gospel by subtle and allegory interpretations. About the same period Manes, or Manichæus, a Persian,* incorporating with the Christion system the tenets of his countrymen the ancient Magi; particularly their leading doctrine of the coeternal existence of two adverse beings, the one the ruler of light or good, the other of darkness or evil; and rejecting the greater part of the New Testament, announced himself as commissioned from above to establish a right faith and right practice by a new Gospel, dictated to him, as he averred, by God himself. Regarding, like the Gnostics, matter as intrinsically and essentially corrupt, he enjoined on his *elect* followers

* The principal tenets of the Manichæans are explained by Mosheim, i. p. 395, &c.

the perpetual mortification of the body, the renunciation of external comforts, and the extinction of all desires tending to the pursuit of external objects. To the subordinate class of his disciples, denominated *hearers*, he permitted some relaxation of his frantic austerity. Noetus, Sabellius, Paul of Samosata, and others, became distinguished in this age by various heretical opinions concerning the Trinity: opinions which appear to have arisen chiefly from an absurd and presumptuous desire to elucidate two subjects which must ever remain inexplicable by man, the mode of union between the persons of the Godhead, and between the Divine and the human nature of Christ. Several inferior topics of dissension contributed to agitate the Christian church. Among these controversies there may be noticed the disputes concerning the method in which recanting heretics were to be readmitted into the congregation. Many of the Oriental and African churches required such persons to be re-baptized: while the greater part of the European Christians used no other form on such occasions than prayer and the imposition of hands. On the one side Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, a man of moderation, and on the other, Stephen, bishop of Rome, a violent and imperious prelate, took the lead in this controversy. The reception also into the church of persons who had been excommunicated on account of heinous transgressions, or had apostatised under persecution, was a topic which excited vehement contention. The Novatians, so called from their leader Novatus, became remarkable by adopting on this subject the line of unrelenting rigour. It must be acknowledged with regret that in each of these controversies Christian charity, though not violated by all the combatants without exception, was frequently disregarded. And it must also be confessed, that many of the Christian writers, in defending the true faith against erroneous brethren or against unbelievers, were accustomed to employ rethorical sophistries, arts, evasions, incompatible with simple and sober investigation.

Antecedently to the commencement of this century the sect of Ascetics had gradually arisen in Egypt; and had extended itself into Syria and the adjoining regions. They were characterised, sometimes, like the Grecian and Roman philosophers, by a peculiar garb; and at all times by an extreme and unnatural strictness of voluntary discipline. Solitude, abstinence, watchings, profound and continued meditation, were among the religious severities by which they laboured to abstract their minds from earthly objects, and to render their souls more adapted, as they conceived, for communion with God. Hitherto they had contented themselves with exercising their austerities in the course of domestic life. But now, becoming more and more gloomy, unsocial, and morose, they frequently renounced their friends and their families; sequestered themselves in caves and deserts; and tortured themselves with the wildest penances which a disordered imagination could suggest. A considerable portion of mysticism derived from the Platonic school generally went hand in hand with these extravagances of conduct.

After the decease of Constantine, his empire was divided among his three sons; until by the death of the eldest brother in a civil war against the youngest, and the subsequent assassination of the conqueror by a rebel, it centered in Constantius. The three brothers were favourers of Christianity; and laboured, though not always by unobjectionable means, to abolish the Pagan superstition. That superstition however experienced a determined support from the emperor Julian, who ascended the throne A. D. 361. His aversion to the Christian religion, which the artifices of the Platonic philosophers chiefly led him to renounce, was aggravated by antipathy to the other branches of the Constantine family, stained with the blood of his nearest relations. Affecting moderation, he assailed the Christians with equal dexterity and bitterness. He abrogated their privileges; shut up their schools; encouraged sectaries and schismatics: and exercised against the Gospel the wit of his Imperial pen. In order to decry the prophecies of Christ, he encouraged the Jews to

rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem. But the undertaking was frustrated, according to the relation of Ammianus Marcellinus, a Pagan philosopher, by earthquakes, and the eruption of balls of fire, which dispersed the terrified workmen, and demolished their labours. After a short reign of twenty months Julian died in the Persian war. By enemies to the Christian faith his character has been undeservedly exalted. His genius was considerable: his love of letters, and his military courage, still greater. But he was the slave of superstition; addicted to magic; credulous and vain-glorious in the extreme; and confirmed in habits of cunning, dissimulation, and duplicity. His successor Jovian, and the emperors who followed to the close of the century, particularly Theodosius the Great, exerted themselves with various degrees of zeal for the support of Christianity. The ancient religion of the empire declined on all sides more and more: and the Gospel advanced into new regions, Armenia, Iberia, and Ethiopia.

Yet this century was in many respects productive of the most serious calamities to the church. Persecution indeed, after its short-lived efforts under Galerius and his coadjutors, had been nearly idle: except when it roused Athanaric, king of the Goths, against the converted part of his subject: or when, infusing into the mind of Sapor, the Persian monarch, suspicions of the political fidelity of the Christians, it deluged Persia with their blood. Persecution, however, may deserve to be styled the friend of Christian virtue. At least it is an enemy far less dreadful than prosperity accompanied by schisms, heresies, and corruption of discipline, morality, and doctrine. Among schisms, that of the Donatists in Africa stands pre-eminent. It arose A. D. 311, in consequence of the election of a bishop of Carthage by the neighbouring prelates, without the accustomed concurrence of those of Numidia. The latter chose another bishop: and the controversy was brought before Constantine, who appears to have been desirous of acting with great impartiality. Two successive councils of bishops, convened from various provinces, decided against the Donatists: and the judgment, being brought

by appeal before the emperor, was by him carefully examined in the presence of the contrary parties, and confirmed. Hence he was loaded by the Donatists with the most acrimonious abuse: until at length he deprived them of their churches, banished their seditious bishops, and put some of them to death. He soon however returned to milder counsels: and to terminate the ravages and massacres of the Circumcelliones, a numerous and powerful set of banditti, composed of the frantic populace who embraced the party of Donatus, revoked the laws which had been enacted against that faction. His sons also endeavoured to heal the schism. But Donatus and his associates opposed all accommodation; and pronounced the adverse churches to have fallen from Christian communion. The defeat of their army, the Circumcelliones, by Macarius, broke their power: numbers of the Donatists were banished, and others put to death; and much unjustifiable severity was exercised. Julian restored the exiles to their country and their privileges: and their influence soon became predominant. Gratian, A. D. 377, deprived them by his edicts of their churches, and prohibited their assemblies. But in the face of these laws they soon afterwards were found able to number no fewer than four hundred African prelates of their party. About the close of the century, however, they rapidly declined, through internal divisions, and the zealous exertions of Augustine bishop of Hippo.

About the time when the Donatists arose, Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria, advanced his peculiar opinions respecting the Son of God; affirming him not to partake of the Divine nature, and to be no more than a mere creature, although the first indeed and noblest of those which the Almighty had formed. Notwithstanding the expulsion of Arius from the communion of the church by a council held at Alexandria, his tenets, which he strenuously laboured to establish, attracted so much attention, and gained so great a number of partisans; that Constantine, to quiet the troubles and commotions spreading throughout the empire, assembled a council of the deputies of the church, A. D. 325, at

Nice in Bithynia, by which the Arian doctrine was condemned. In some few years the emperor, persuaded by the friends of Arius that their leader had been unjustly treated; and receiving from them such an explanation of his opinions as rendered them in appearance not essentially different from the faith of the church, recalled him from the banishment into which he had been sent, and distinguished him by marks of favour. Among the successors of Constantine, several were favourers of Arianism. And the opinions of the Christian world too often fluctuated in compliance with the changing sentiments of its masters. Each party in turn laboured to establish its victory by unjustifiable proceedings against the other. In process of time the Arian doctrine branched out into various forms and sub divisions. Apollinaris, in opposing it, fell into the contrary error of denying the humanity of Christ.

In other respects the internal state of the church had now undergone a fatal change. Superstition advanced with rapid strides; and made successful inroads into every quarter. The reverence shewn to the memory and example of those holy men, who had sustained martyrdom for the religion of Christ, had been carried in the preceding century to excess. Their tombs had been selected as places of prayer: and the sanctity ascribed to the spot where their remains were deposited was gradually extended to the remains themselves. The evil, once established, augmented daily. A pilgrimage to the sepulchre of a martyr was now esteemed most meritorious. Festivals in commemoration of the sufferers were multiplied. The places of their burial were explored with unwearied ardour. Pious frauds relative to such discoveries became frequent. Earth brought from Palestine and other scenes held in veneration was esteemed a potent remedy against the violence of evil spirits, and sold at a very high price. The worship of relics and of images commenced. Prayers for the dead became common; as likewise the belief in the existence of a purgatorial fire destined to purify the souls of the departed. The Lord's supper was occasionally celebrated at the tombs of martyrs, and at fune

rals : a practice which led to the subsequent usage of masses performed in honour of the saints and for the benefit of the dead. And the groundwork for the future adoration of the bread and wine was prepared by the custom of holding them up, previously to their distribution, for the religious contemplation of the people. The gaudy ceremonies of Heathen idolatry were transferred or accommodated to the service of the Christian church. Christianity was tortured that it might seem to agree with the doctrines of the Platonic school ; and was defended by subtleties, sophistry, and invective. Two most abominable maxims prevailed : the one, that deceit and falsehood for the advantage of the church were virtues ; the other, that obstinate error in religion was justly punishable by civil penalties and corporal inflictions. Monkish institutions were formed into a system. The solitary Ascetics dispersed in the caves and deserts of Upper Egypt were persuaded to incorporate themselves into a society by Anthony, who prescribed a code of rules for their observance. The practice immediately passed into Palestine and Syria ; and advancing into Mesopotamia, speedily overspread the East. Italy and the neighbouring islands, Gaul, and other provinces of Europe in succession, became filled with monasteries. In different monasteries different rules were pursued ; and the austerities of the Orientals exceeded those of the Europeans. Such however was the general prepossession in favour of an institution, which exchanged the innocent pleasures and the natural connections and charities of life for a morose and gloomy superstition : that when Jovinian, an Italian monk, taught that all persons who fulfilled their baptismal vows, and lived conformably to the Gospel, were equally acceptable to God, and equally entitled through Christ to the rewards of futurity, with those who lived in solitude, celibacy, and mortification ; he was condemned by the church at Rome, and by a council at Milan, and banished by the emperor Honorius.

In the beginning of the fifth century the Roman Empire was divided into two portions. The Western Empire comprehended, under Rome its capital, Italy,

Gaul, Britain, Spain, the neighbouring part of Africa, and other provinces of the west. The Eastern, called also the Greek Empire, because it included the dominions of ancient Greece, comprised Asia, and the neighbouring parts of Europe, together with Egypt; and had Constantinople for its metropolis. The Western empire was now assailed with redoubled violence by the Northern barbarians, who had for a considerable time harassed and endangered its frontiers. The banks of the Rhine and the Danube no longer opposed a successful barrier. Fortresses and legions were swept away before the military deluge. Goths, and Huns, and Quadi, and Heruli, with many other savage swarms, pushing each other forward in succession, even from the distant regions of Tartary, poured in their myriads through the breach. Province after province was rent from the declining state. At length, A. D. 476, Odoacer, king of the Heruli, having vanquished Augustulus, the last emperor of Rome, extinguished the Western Empire, and established his own dominion over Italy. Seventeen years afterwards Odoacer was killed, and his dominions seized by Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths. The new monarchs faintly professing a nominal subordination to the emperor of the East, ruled in perfect independence.

In these convulsions the Christians underwent peculiar sufferings: as they not only shared in the common miseries of the times; but had also to encounter the cruel usage which their religion drew upon them from the invaders, who were principally Pagans. By degrees however their new masters embraced the religion of Christ. But that circumstances did not in every instance prevent persecution. Geneseric, king of the Vandals established in Africa, was a bigoted adherent to Arianism; and eagerly persecuted the Christians of a different persuasion. Among the troubles of this age the calamities of the British church must not be disregarded. When the Roman legions had retired from Britain to the defence of the more important parts of the empire; the natives of the southern portion of the island, unable to repel the sanguinary inroads of the

Scots and Picts, applied for assistance, A. D. 449. to the Saxons. Vortigern, the British king, soon found his German allies more formidable than the enemies whom they had vanquished. New armies of Saxons arrived: and their purpose to seize the country for their own use became apparent. A bloody war took place; and having continued with various success during one hundred and thirty years, ended decisively in favour of the Saxons. Multitudes of the ancient inhabitants fled into Wales or to the continent. In the course of these conflicts vast numbers of the British Christians were put to death with the severest tortures by their idolatrous assailants; and the religion was almost extinguished. Ireland in the mean time received the light of the Gospel. Palladius, who was sent thither by the Roman pontiff Celestine, for the conversion of the people, dying after a laborious and unsuccessful mission, was replaced by Succathus, better known by the name of St. Patrick, a native of Scotland. He arrived A. D. 432; converted great numbers of the Irish; and after a ministry of forty years founded the archbishopric of Armagh. During these transactions Christianity continued to gain ground in the Eastern empire over the remnants of Paganism: but had to sustain a sanguinary persecution of six years from the Persian monarch Vararenes.

In the course of this century new heresies and schisms co-operated with the unsubdued remains of those which already existed to trouble the peace and impair the charity of Christians. The Donatists sometimes prosperous, sometimes driven into obscurity, continued, though their affairs declined on the whole, to afflict Africa. The Arians, flying before the imperial edicts, spread their tenets among the Goths, the Vandals, the Burgundians and other barbarous tribes. At Rome, and in the East, Pelagius, a British monk, denying the original depravation of human nature at the fall, and the necessity of the aid of Divine grace to enable man to arrive even at the highest degrees of piety and virtue, became the head of a sect. Controversies still more vehement were excited, first by Nestorius bishop of Constantinople; and after

wards, by Eutyches, abbot of a convent in the same city. Nestorius, who is to this day held in the highest esteem among the Christians of Syria and the adjacent countries, having published his disapprobation of the title of "Mother of God," which was frequently ascribed to the Virgin Mary; was accused of dividing the divine and human natures of Christ into two distinct persons, and condemned by a general council and banished. The sentiments ascribed to him he denied to the last: and at any rate, though his presumption and violence are unquestionable, was treated with harshness and injustice, being condemned unheard, his explanations of his doctrine not being even read, nor any attention paid to his offers of submission. In opposing Nestorianism Eutyches plunged into the opposite extreme of excluding the human nature of our Redeemer. The predestinarian opinions attributed to Augustine were also the source of warm discussion. Ignorance in the mean time attended the progress of the uncultivated subverters of the Western empire. And both in the West and East the superstitions of the preceding century took firmer root, and extended their branches far and wide. Departed saints were assiduously invoked; and, in order to conciliate their protection, their very images were honoured with religious worship. Reliques of martyrs were valued more and more: pilgrimages augmented: ceremonies encreased in number and ostentation; austerities became more extravagant and senseless.* In the

* Among the fanatics of this age the pillar-saints were the most remarkable and the most venerated. Simeon, denominated Stylites, (from a Greek word signifying a column) is recorded to have passed thirty-seven years on the top of five successive pillars; the first of which was six cubits high, and the last forty. His reputation, and the fame of his miracles, was unbounded: and the desire of imitating him extreme. The practice continued in the East even to the twelfth century. In the West it was never permitted to establish itself. Wulfilaicus an imirator of Simeon, having erected a pillar in the vicinity of Treves; the neighbouring bishops ordered it to be pulled down.

decision of religious controversies it was adopted as a standing law, even in councils, to determine questions according to the sentiments of the plurality of the ancient doctors, who had left behind them an opinion applicable to the subject.

It is now time to attend to the conduct and authority of the bishops of Rome. Antecedently to the reign of Constantine, while a new capital of the world had not yet arisen on the shores of the Hellespont; the bishop of the metropolis easily obtained not only a precedence in dignity over all his brethren of the provinces, but some degree of jurisdiction over such of them as were stationed within his reach. The power which by his rank, his magnificence, his princely revenues, and his sacred character he had acquired over the people of Rome, rendered him by degrees dreaded and courted by the emperors. His authority was in consequence enlarged. He received about A. D. 379, by an edict from the emperors Valentinian and Gratian a somewhat undefined yet apparently supreme jurisdiction over the church of the Western empire. The pope thenceforward issued decretal epistles; appointed vicars in the provinces; cited the bishops to Rome; convoked general councils; and openly announced himself as head and sovereign of the universal church.* From Theodosius and Valentinian III. he obtained, A. D. 445, another adict † confirming in the amplest manner these enormous pretensions: which we find fully recognised within some few years in the letters of the Gallican bishops; and ascribed to the pope on the very grounds on which he rested his claim, namely, as being successor to the inheritance and the sovereignty of Saint Peter. But when a rival of Rome became the seat of empire,

* In proof of these facts, and of others to be mentioned, see Sir Isaac Newton's Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel, chap. viii.

† See the edict in Sir I. Newton as above: which though recognising in the most extravagent terms the power claimed by the pope, ascribes it not to *Divine right*, but to the grants of preceding emperors.

at the opposite extremity of Europe ; the prelate of the ancient capital surveyed with an eye of jealous indignation the growing honours and authority of his brother of Constantinople : and exerted himself with the utmost vigour to uphold a pre-eminence, which the latter laboured with equal zeal to shake off. Every weapon which presented itself was employed to check the rising independence of the East. When the provincial bishops who were subjected to the patriarchal see of Antioch, or of Alexandria, felt their rights invaded by their rulers ; when those patriarchs themselves perceived their inability to resist the lordly prelate of Byzantium : the Roman pontiff heard with delight the complainants appeal to himself. As yet however he contended in vain. He saw the weight of the Eastern emperors thrown into the scale of his competitor. He saw Asia, Thrace, and even the Illyrian shores of the Adriatic, subjected to the Oriental bishop. He saw that bishop triumphant over his most violent efforts, A. D. 451, in the council of Chalcedon : and crowned by its decrees with rights and honours in every respect equal to those which had been conferred on the ecclesiastical sovereign of Rome. The unchristian spirit of these ambitious rivals inflamed their partisans throughout Asia and Europe : and most efficaciously contributed to excite dissensions and virulence and a worldly temper in the church.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY FROM THE SUBVERSION OF THE WESTERN EMPIRE TO THE END OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

CLOVIS, the king of the Franks who had fixed their residence in Gaul, had embraced the Christian faith, A. D. 496. Hence a more willing ear was lent in the beginning of the next century by his subjects to the preaching of Remigius: and numerous converts professed the Gospel. Converts multiplied also among the Heruli, the Alani, and other barbarous nations of the West: and in the East among the Abasgi, who bordered on Mount Caucasus. It is however to be feared that many of the new Christians were imperfectly acquainted with the doctrines, and still more imperfectly with the spirit, of the religion which they adopted. And the conversion of vast numbers of Jews in France, Spain, and Libya, appears to have been effected rather by menaces and violence than by the influence of fair argument on the understanding. Columbas, an Irish monk, passing as a missionary into Scotland, laboured among the natives with success. In England also the foundations of the true faith were laid afresh. Ethelbert, monarch of Kent, the most powerful of the cotemporary Saxon princes, was gradually disposed towards Christianity by his queen Bertha, the daughter of Cherebert, king of Paris. At this period, A. D. 596, the Roman pontiff Gregory, surnamed the Great, sent Augustine, at the head of forty Benedictine monks, to preach the Gospel. The king, and the greater part of his subjects were baptised: and Augustine became the first archbishop of Canterbury. In other parts of the island the idolatrous Saxons continued to exercise unrelenting cruelties against the ancient inhabitants, who retained the Christian faith. In Italy the kingdom of the Ostrogoths was destroyed, A. D. 566, by Narses,

the general of the Eastern emperor Justinian: and Rome, transformed into a dukedom, and degraded from the rank of a capital, was subjected to the lieutenant of that monarch, who resided with the title of exarch at Ravenna. Two years afterwards a new revolution, terrible to the Christians, supervened. A Pagan army of Lombards rushing from Pannonia, overwhelmed Italy: and, with the exception of Rome and Ravenna, having mastered the whole country, and established their kingdom at Ticinum, grievously afflicted the followers of the Gospel. In a short time, however, they embraced the religion which they had oppressed. Autharis, their third monarch, adopted, A. D. 587, the tenets of Arianism; and his successor acknowledged the Nicene faith. During the course of these transactions Persia upheld its established character for cruelty to the Christian name. Chosroes, its monarch, denouncing vengeance not only against the person but against the God of Justinian, slaughtered the Christians with every aggravation of torture, which inhumanity and impiety could furnish.

Not many new controversies of moment broke forth in this century. Of the old sects, Arianism, after a short triumph, received a blow from which it never was able to recover, by the expulsion of the Italian Goths and the African Vandals before the arms of Justinian; and by the defection of Reccared, a Spanish sovereign, and of other princes. The Donatists also, having lost the protection of the Vandals, finally dwindled, after a concluding effort, into oblivion. But the advantage which the church gained in these respects was balanced by the still encreasing prevalence of ignorance and superstition. In the West, the little learning which remained was confined within the walls of the monasteries. It was by the protection of those walls that the manuscripts of the classical authors, though neglected, were preserved; and have descended with the sacred records of antiquity to a happier age. The tranquility and the taste of the Eastern empire were rather more favourable to science and literature; yet were unequal to the prevention of their decline. Additional rites, no less trivial

than cumbrous, and usages fitted only to lead men from looking for salvation through a life of Christian holiness, disfigured and tended to explode true religion both in Europe and in Asia. The honour due unto God was transferred more and more to saints. An opinion was industriously circulated by a corrupted and avaricious priesthood, that the forgiveness of sins was to be purchased by liberality to monasteries and convents, which multiplied daily: and that the irresistible intercession of departed saints would be exerted for the man, who had enriched the temples dedicated to their memory. After stating this fact, it is almost needless to add that vice rapidly encreased among the clergy as well as among the laity. The bishops of Rome and of Constantinople were still antagonists. The tidings that John, prelate of the latter city, had assumed the title of œcumenical, or universal bishop, struck Pelagius the Roman pontiff with horror. Rousing himself at length to repel the fatal blow, he declaimed by his representative Gregory (who afterwards became pope) against the blasphemy of the title; and thundered against his daring rival the portentous appellation of Antichrist. Perhaps he forgot that his own predecessors, whose rights he was thus eager to maintain, had long claimed the jurisdiction implied in the name of universal bishop; and had assumed the kindred denomination of head of the universal church. At this period, however, the Gothic kings of Italy, no less than the Eastern emperors, denied the unlimited authority of the pontiff; and exacted from him various tokens of submission.

The seventh century witnessed the extension of the Christian faith in the East to China and the remotest parts of Asia, chiefly by the labours of the Nestorians. In the West the faith of the Gospel became universal throughout our own island; whence it was carried to Batavia, and other parts of the continent. Compulsory conversions of the persecuted Jews were urged forward by the emperor Heraclius: and by the monarchs of Gaul and Spain, in the face of the avowed disapprobation of the Roman pontiff. Darkness and ignorance overspread the Christian world, under the auspicious aid

of the subtleties of Aristotelian logic. The vices of the monastic clergy augmented with their riches. The superstitions of the preceding age multiplied. Penitential discipline was formed into a system; and became generally recognised as a full expiation for sin. By a law of pope Boniface V. the churches were rendered places of refuge to all persons, who should fly to them for protection; and thus became public asylums for the most abandoned criminals. To the turbulent remains of ancient divisions the new sect of Monothelites was added; and tormented and perplexed the East and the West with metaphysical disputes concerning the unity of will in the two natures of Christ. In the course of this controversy pope Honorius, and his Monothelite doctrine were formally condemned in the presence of the papal legates by the general council of Constantinople: a circumstance which has produced no small embarrassment to Roman Catholic writers, who have felt themselves bound by their faith to uphold the perfect infallibility both of general councils and of popes. The claims however of papal supremacy were urged with such unceasing ardor, that Boniface III. sought and obtained, A. D. 606, from the emperor Phocas, one of the most detestable of tyrants, that very title of œcumenical or universal bishop; the desire of which, Gregory, his predecessor in the see of Rome, had stigmatised in John of Byzantium as a characteristic of Antichrist. Yet much opposition continued to be made to them by temporal sovereigns. Pope Martin, having treated the Imperial edicts with extreme contempt, in consequence of their being favourable to Monothelitism, of which, unlike to the future pope Honorius, he was a bitter enemy; and having solemnly anathematised and consigned to the devil and his angels the Monothelites and their patrons; was seized, at the command of the enraged emperor Constans, by the exarch of Italy, and detained prisoner for a year, with much cruel usage, in the isle of Naxos. The ancient Britons and the Scots distinguished themselves by perseverance in maintaining their religious independence.

In the midst of these contentions, and from a remote and disregarded corner of the East, a new and tremendous scourge of Christianity had arisen. Mahomet had established his imposture in Arabia. Born of the noblest family of the most honourable tribe among his countrymen, yet beset with indigence and obscurity, he passed his early years in the humble occupations of a camel driver and of a commercial agent to a wealthy widow; until he was raised to distinction by becoming the husband of his employer. In the political and religious situation of the inhabitants of Arabia he perceived an opening, by which a daring, and sagacious, and unprincipled adventurer might arrive at unlimited dominion. Divided into a number of unconnected and hostile tribes, the Arabians were not likely to unite into a general confederacy against any person, who might appear to aim at superiority over one or two tribes. The very enmity of some was likely to conciliate to him the friendship and assistance of others. Those whom private and national antipathies had thus separated, were kept asunder still more widely by differences in religion. Arabia, the land of freedom, was peopled with discordant sects of every persuasion. With Jews it abounded as early as at the day of Pentecost; and had received numbers of fugitives from the arms of the Romans. In many parts of the country Christianity had made powerful advances. Among some tribes the religious tenets of the Magi had been introduced from Persia. The rest of the people, though generally holding the unity of God, were absorbed in idolatry. But Jews, Christians, and idolaters were enveloped in universal ignorance. What then might not be hoped by a deceiver, who should cautiously lay before the Arabians as coming from God a form of religion dextrously accommodated to the leading tenets of the different parties, on whose ignorance he wished to impose? On this foundation, and according to this plan, Mahomet erected his superstructure. Having attracted during some years the public attention by frequent retirements to a cave in a mountain in the neighbourhood of Mecca, the

city where he resided ; he at length announced himself, A. D. 609, privately in the outset, and to his own family, as a prophet invested with a Divine commission to establish true religion upon earth. His sacred doctrine and institutions he professed to receive from Heaven by the communication of the angel Gabriel. He imparted them to the world in the Koran ; the chapters of which he produced in slow succession during three-and twenty years : and usually for the evident purpose of meeting some emergency in his affairs, or of authorising the gratification of his licentious passions. Discarding all mysteries as adverse to his prospect of success, he unremittingly inculcated the tenet in which all descriptions of his hearers were disposed to agree, the the unity of God. The Jews he conciliated by upholding the Divine authority of the Old Testament : the Christians he allured by paying similar respect to the New. Moses and Christ he averred to have been sent as forerunners of himself; and to have predicted his approach and his superiority, in passages which had been blindly misunderstood, or maliciously corrupted or expunged. Pretensions to miraculous powers he warily disclaimed. Miracles, he said, had been proved, by the example of Moses and of Christ, ineffectual to secure the reception of truth. Unbelievers he menaced with unspeakable and eternal anguish in a future life. To believers he promised the everlasting pleasures of a sensual paradise. But he reserved the highest enjoyments and glories of the world to come for those who should expend their possession or their blood in support of his religion. The tardiness of his progress might have driven a less resolute impostor to despair. Fourteen proselytes were the fruit of three years. Some years afterwards the number scarcely exceeded one hundred.* The rage of his enemies constrained him to save his life by flight from Mecca, A. D. 622 : an event from which the Mahometans date their era, denominated the Hegira, or the Flight. His fortunes now changed. He was received at Medina as a

* Gibbon's History, 4to. vol. v. p. 220, &c.

prince and a prophet. Converts and adventurers flocked to his standard. Laying aside the tolerating language which his feebleness had inserted into the earlier parts of the Koran; he declared himself sent forth to establish true religion, the belief in the unity of God and in himself as the apostle of God, by the sword. Against all infidels, he declared war. To idolaters, he offered conversion, or death. To the followers of Moses and of Christ, a more liberal choice was offered. "Ye Christian dogs,* ye know your option: the Ko-"ran, the tribute, or the sword." Such was the address usual among his successors to their enemies of the Eastern Empire. Victory and defeat were alike converted by Mahomet into engines for consolidating his power. The one was a special proof of his Divine mission; the other a punishment on the incredulity of his followers. At length his arms were every where triumphant. He was enthroned in Mecca, and acknowledged and obeyed throughout all Arabia as a Divinely-appointed lawgiver and sovereign. Tranquil at home, he looked around for conquest. Palestine he invaded; and fixed his eye on the fertility of Syria. But his career was arrested, A. D. 632, by death. The tide of victory, however, flowed on without interruption. Succeeding caliphs trod in his footsteps. Frantic with religious zeal and the thirst of plunder, and steeled against fear and danger by a belief in the most rigid predestination; innumerable hosts of Saracens, so termed from a principal tribe of the Arabians, rushed forth on all sides. Within six years after the death of Mahomet, Syria, after the destruction of immense armies dispatched for its protection, was completely wrested from the emperor Heraclius; who publicly acknowledged that the flagrant wickedness of the Christians had justly with-

* Dog was, and still remains, the common term of infamy appropriated to unbelievers by the Mahometans. "The Grecian "dog" was the usual title of the emperor of Constantinople. See Ockley's History of the Saracens. The letter of the caliph Harun al Rashid to the emperor Nicephorus is addressed, "To the "Roman Dog." Gibbon, vol. v. p 433.

drawn from them the protection of their God. Egypt and Persia speedily bowed to the same yoke. The whole extent of Africa as far as the Atlantic was subdued by the commencement of the following century. Crossing the streights of Gibraltar, A. D. 710, the victorious Saracens invaded Spain : and having in the course of some few years reduced that kingdom, passed forwards, A. D. 721, over the Pyrenean mountains into France, and occupied all the southern provinces. But these instruments of Divine vengeance began now to exceed in this direction the limits of their commission. Pressing on to the very centre of France, they were defeated near Tours, with dreadful and decisive slaughter by Charles Martel, A. D. 732 ; and the remains of their forces were driven back into Spain. In the meantime their armies from Asia had twice besieged Constantinople itself. The first siege commenced A. D. 668, and lasted during seven successive summers. During the winter months the assailants regularly retired to the isle of Cyzicus, where they had established their magazines. The city proved impregnable : but was obliged to purchase peace by a tribute. The attempt was ineffectually renewed by the Mahometans, from A. D. 716, to A. D. 718.

During the course of the eighth century the calamities of the East were continued. The Turks, a savage nation of Tartarian descent, rushing from the solitudes of Mount Caucasus, overran Colchis, Iberia, Albania, and Armenia : and having vanquished the Saracens in those quarters, turned their fury against the Greeks. During the last twenty years of this century, and in the beginning of the next, Asia Minor was cruelly ravaged by the Caliphs, and tribute again exacted from the emperor of Constantinople. But no calamities appear to have retarded the progress of superstition and vice. A new controversy concerning the procession of the Holy Ghost embroiled the Greek and Latin Christians with each other ; the Orientals maintaining that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father only, the Western churches, from the Father and the Son. A dissention still more vehement broke forth respecting ima-

ges. Bardanes, the Greek emperor, A. D. 712, having removed from the church of St. Sophia a picture of the meeting of the sixth general council, because that assembly had condemned his favorites, the Monothelites; sent orders to Rome for the adoption of similar proceedings. The Roman pontiff, not satisfied with manifesting his indignant contempt by a formal rejection of the Imperial edict; commanded six pictures representing the six general councils to be placed in the porch of the cathedral of St. Peter: and summoning a council at Rome, caused the emperor to be condemned as an apostate from the true faith. Leo the Isaurian, a succeeding emperor, shocked at the idolatrous worship paid to images, and at the consequent reproaches and sarcasms poured out against the Christians by Mahometans and Jews, commanded the statues, A. D. 726, to be removed out of the churches. A civil war in several parts of his dominions was the result. Pope Gregory, without ceremony, excomunicated the emperor, as the Greek writers all affirm, and as many learned Roman Catholic writers acknowledge: the Italian provinces subject to the Greek empire rose in rebellion: and Rome, with part of the adjacent country became, in the same or the following year, an independent state, really or nominally under the civil government of its senate.* Leo and, in general, his successors persisted in their efforts to exterminate image-worship: and the pontiffs were still more outrageous in their exertions to uphold it. A new potentate of the West, Charlemagne, who had established himself in Imperial power over France and Germany, united with the Eastern emperors against the pontiffs in this contoversy: and in a council of three hundred bishops assembled at Francfort, the worship of images was unanimously condemned: a decision heartily and openly approved by the British church. Charle-

* Nominally under that of its senate; but really, as it should seem from the words of Sigonius, (see Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, vol. iii. p. 398.) under that of the Pope. "Ita Roma, Romanusque ducatus à Græcis ad Romanum Pontificem— prevenit."

magne also was successful in his purpose of converting his enemies, the Saxons and Huns, to a profession of the Christian faith. Violence however was his chief instrument: and political expediency seems to have been one of his predominant motives. The persevering ministry of Winfrid, a British Benedictine monk, among the Frieslanders and Germans, appears entitled to very considerable praise. His solicitude, it must be owned for the glory of the Roman pontiff, equalled his zeal for the glory of Christ: and his proceedings were in several respects highly objectionable. But he pursued his labours during forty years: and was at length murdered, with fifty of his associates, by the barbarians.

In the West the privileges and the wealth of the clerical order became enormous. The future punishments of sin might be prevented, it was supposed, by liberality to God and the saints; in other words, to the churches and monasteries. Hence the accumulations of a life of rapine, and the treasures that had survived a life of profligacy, were alike transferred on a deathbed to the monks. Emperors, kings and princes expiated their crimes by investing bishops and churches with the possession and sovereignty of castles, cities, and provinces. The higher ecclesiastics, now became temporal potentates, were seen clad in armour at the head of armies of their vassals. The Roman pontiff, advancing daily in strength, and extolled as a sort of god throughout the Western world, by the innumerable swarms of monks devoted to his cause and received under his special protection, reared his head aloft above the sovereigns of the earth. His conduct to the Eastern world, by the innumerable swarms devoted to his cause and received under his special protection, reared his head aloft above the sovereigns of the earth. His conduct to the Eastern emperor has been related. An opinion was encouraged and established, that any person excommunicated by the Pope forfeited not only his civil rights but the common privileges of humanity. Pepin, first officer to Childeric III. king of France aspired to the crown: and convened and consulted, A. D. 751, the states of the realm. By the direction of the states ambassadors were dispatched to the pontiff to so-

licit his decision on the question—"whether the divine "law did not permit a valiant people to dethrone an in- "dolent and pusillanimous sovereign, and to elect a "more worthy successor." The Pope pronounced in the affirmative: Childeric was deposed, and Pepin appointed king. Three years afterwards the succeeding pontiff repaired to France, confirmed his predecessor's decision; absolved Pepin from his allegiance to Childeric; and, having crowned him, requested his aid against the Lombards. Pepin complied; marched into Italy; and constrained Aristulphus, the vanquished king of the Lombards, to engage to surrender for ever to the Pope and his successors in the see of Rome. the Exarchate of Ravenna and its dependencies. On the retreat of the conqueror Aristulphus retracted, and besieged Rome. The Pope renewed his application to Pepin with menaces of excommunication in case of tardiness.* Pepin obeyed, and compelled the Lombards to an immediate performance of the agreement. From this time, A. D. 755, the Pope acknowledged as a temporal sovereign, no longer dated his epistles and bulls by the years of the reign of the Eastern emperor. A subsequent invasion of the Lombards added, A. D. 774, another crown to the pontiff. Charlemagne, the son of Pepin, flew to his aid, overturned the Lombard empire, and bestowed some of its provinces on the Pope. Towards the close of the century, A. D. 796, Charlemagne was solicited by the Pope to reduce by his interposition the Roman people to allegiance to the holy see.† In the consequent dissentions which arose at Rome, the Pope being seized, imprisoned, and formerly accused, escaped to Charlemagne; who, on his arrival at Rome, A. D. 800, presided in a council of French and Italian bishops convened to judge the cause. The council, however without entering into the matter, declared that the Pope, the supreme judge of all men,

* See the words quoted by Sir I. Newton, Observations on Daniel, p. 79,—"pro datâ sibi potentiâ, alienandum fore a regno "Dei & vitâ eternâ."

† To bind them by oath "in fide & subjectione." Sir I. Newton's Observations, p. 81.

was above being judged by any other than himself. Averring, therefore, his innocence, he was deemed acquitted. Charlemagne, by the influence of the Pope over the Roman people, was now gratified in his desire of being elected emperor of the Romans. In return he bestowed on the Pope full jurisdiction, subordinately to his own Imperial pre-eminence, over Rome and its territories. These three principalities, Rome and its dependencies, the Exarchate of Ravenna, and the Lombard provinces, are cited and solemnly confirmed by oath to the pontiffs in a subsequent grant of Louis the Pious, son of Charlemagne, to be held of the Roman emperor for the use of the church. Amidst the solid acquisitions the victory of the pontiff, A. D. 787, in the second council held at Nice in Bithynia over the Iconoclasts (the breakers of images) and the enemies of his supremacy, scarcely deserves notice: nor the losses which he sustained through the indignation of the Greek emperors, who confiscated his treasures, and abolished his jurisdiction, in Sicily and other provinces of their dominions.

In the ninth century the Saracens, masters of the greater part of Africa, and of Asia, even to the extremities of India, awed numbers of the Christians into apostacy; and cruelly harassed the stedfast servants of Christ. In the remnant of the Grecian empire religious dissensions prevailed. The disputes concerning the procession of the Holy Spirit continued. Violent persecutions, ultimately productive of a civil war, were instituted by the emperors of Constantinople against the Paulicians, a sect established in Armenia, and charged with Manichæan tenets; yet stedfast in maintaining, among various errors, one excellent but most offensive doctrine, the unlawfulness of worshipping the Virgin Mary. The controversy respecting images was also upheld in the East with uncertain success until A. D. 842: when a council at Constantinople decisively pronounced in favour of idolatry: and the whole East, Armenia excepted, adored without further struggle the victorious mediators of wood and stone. Among the Latins the same unchristian practice slowly yet percep-

tibly gained ground against vigorous opposition. New foundations for a complete schism between the Eastern and Western churches were laid by the appeal of Ignatius, the deposed patriarch of Constantinople, to the Roman pontiff; by the proud interference of the latter; and by the reciprocal excommunications fulminated by the Roman and the Byzantine prelates against each other. The doctrine of the Mystics, who professedly aimed in their fanatical precepts at the total abstraction of the soul from earthly objects, and its union in an ineffable manner with the Deity, having long been in high esteem among the Greeks, especially among the monastic orders, now invaded and infected the Latin provinces. The doctrines too of predestination and reprobation obtained adherents. Another and an entirely new discussion was superadded by Paschasius Rodbert, a German monk; who stepped forward from his cloister, and confounded the world by asserting the doctrine of transubstantiation. Gorgeous ceremonies, reverence for reliques, the substitution under countless superstitions of the shew of religion for the reality, increased with the growing darkness of the times. Trials by fiery ordeal, by water, by single combat, by the cross,* advanced in repute. The canonization of saints became frequent: and Europe was deluged with legendary accounts of their miracles and their merits. The monastic clergy continually deserved less and obtained more of public estimation. Monks and abbots crowded the courts of princes; and occupied civil employments wholly foreign to their profession.—The apparent limits of the Christian world were in some parts extended, in others curtailed. Crete and Sicily were completely subdued by the Saracens; who twice pushed their victorious incursions to the walls of Rome. The

* The contending parties stretched out their arms in the form of a cross: and the cause was gained by him who persevered during the longer time in that posture. In the trial by water, the accused person, having his right foot and left hand bound together, was thrown naked into water. If he sank, he was acquitted; if he floated, condemned.

Pagan Normans, issuing from the Baltic, not only infested the coasts and islands of the German ocean, but carried their ravages and massacres into Spain and Italy; and forcibly obtained permanent settlements in France and other countries. Such of them, however, as were established in the neighbourhood of Christian states gradually embraced the gospel. And the labours of some eminent missionaries, particularly of the celebrated Ansgar, in Sweden, Denmark, and the adjacent regions, though inculcating a greatly corrupted species of Christianity, appear to have flowed from good motives, and to have been generally conducted in an equitable manner, and to have been crowned with important success. About the same period Christianity was introduced, at one time in a laudable method, at another by the aid of compulsion, among the Russians and Sclavonians. In England the great Alfred distinguished himself as much by his earnest endeavours to diffuse religious knowledge among his subjects as by his other noble undertakings.

The Roman pontiff now succeeded after repeated struggles in throwing off a badge of subordination, by which he felt himself degraded. Hitherto, after the election of a Pope by the sacerdotal order and the voice of the people of Rome, the Imperial sanction was necessary to authorise his consecration. But Charles the Bald, in return for the important aid of the pontiff in the acquisition of the dignity of emperor, exempted the successors of his benefactor from that humiliating necessity. The popes of this century are in general memorable for ambition and for crimes. Taking advantage of the frequency of competitors for the Imperial throne among the posterity of Charlemagne, they usurped additional prerogatives with respect to the election of an emperor. They extorted by degrees from the European princes a surrender of the supreme authority in religious affairs, originally possessed by the temporal sovereign. They successfully inculcated a persuasion, that the bishop of Rome was appointed by Jesus Christ to be supreme legislator and judge of the universal church: that other bishops consequently derived all

their authority from the Pope: and that councils could not determine any point without his permission and consent. To uphold these aspiring pretensions, so repugnant to the ancient and not yet forgotten rules of ecclesiastical government, the authority of ostensible proofs appeared requisite. What truth could not furnish, fraud stood ready to supply. Conventions, acts of councils, decretal epistles, and other similar records were fabricated: and so fabricated as to represent the see of Rome to all appearance invested in the first ages of the church with the plenary right and exercise of supremacy. By many, and particularly by the French bishops, these impious manœuvres were discerned and detected: and vehement opposition was made to the reception of the forgeries as laws of the church. But the obstinacy of the Popes, especially of Nicholas I. prevailed. Active resistance seemed at an end. Tyranny and imposture were left to range at large: and the boldest spirit scarcely looked to the possibility of reviving the dying liberties of the church.

The tenth century, according to the testimony even of Roman Catholic writers, surpassed all preceding ages in ignorance and in flagitiousness. Baronius himself terms it an iron and a leaden age; an age in which Christ seemed, as it were, to sleep, while the ship was covered by the waves. Genebrard speaks of it as distinguished, in conjunction with half of the next century, for producing near fifty Popes more like to apostates than apostles.* The profession, indeed, of Christianity in a very corrupt form was introduced by the Nestorians of Chaldea among a tribe of Tartars. Poland also and Norway heard of the Gospel: Denmark and Hungary saw an increase of its professors. But the religion preached was that of popery: and the sword was frequently the instrument of conversion. In the East the Christians were trodden down by the Saracens: in the West they endured the persecuting vengeance of the unconverted or apostatising barbarians of Sarmatia, Sclavonia, and some parts of Germany. The multiplication of saints and of ceremonies was immense: the

* See Bp. Newton's Dissertations, vol. iii. p. 156, 157.

practice of piety and of good works, and the dependance on Jesus Christ the only mediator between God and man, proportionally small and declining. On the Virgin Mary in particular new accessions of idolatrous honours were accumulated. The worship of images was universal. When every church exhibited a representation of the Supreme Being in a human form, it is not surprising that in some instances the Anthropomorphite heresy revived. Towards the conclusion of the century Europe trembled with the apprehension, originating in a misinterpretation of a passage in the Apocalypse, that the end of the world was at hand. In many places temples and palaces, as no longer needed, were pulled down or left to decay. Multitudes of people, abandoning their families, occupations, and property, flocked to Palestine, the expected scene of the advent of Christ. The favour of God and the saints was sought by donations to the vicegerents of heaven, the sacerdotal and monastic orders, whose vices became undisguised. The jurisdiction of abbots and other leading ecclesiastics extended itself: and of none more than of the Roman pontiff. Yet the doctrines upheld, and the claims advanced, by the bishop of Rome had to encounter some opposition. The decrees of the councils of Francfort and Paris against the worship of images had not in all parts lost the whole of their force. Transubstantiation was denied by many; especially by Alfric in England, who among other writings pointed against this doctrine, distinguished himself by a homily for Easter, which was wont to be read in all the churches. Several countries retained the use of the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue: and in England they were translated by the command of Athelstan into Saxon. In England too, and elsewhere, the celibacy of the clergy was condemned. In a summary of Christian faith and practice published by a council held A. D. 909, at Trosly near Soissons, neither a belief in the supremacy of the Pope, nor in the sacrifice of the mass, nor in purgatory, nor in additional sacraments, nor in the duty of confession to a priest, nor of worshipping created beings, obtains a place. Even kings and bishops were found who resist-

ed the papal supremacy. An edict prohibiting the election of a pontiff without the previous knowledge and consent of the emperor was promulgated by Otho the Great about the middle of this century; and remained in force until the commencement of the next. Gerbert, archbishop of Rheims, affirmed in a council held in that city, A. D. 991, that a Pope, if he acted amiss, was liable to the censures of the church: and after intimating that John XV. the reigning pontiff, was destitute of charity, pronounced him to be in that case "Antichrist, sitting in the temple of God, and shewing himself that he is God." Had Gerbert then foreseen his own future elevation to the Papal throne; perhaps he might have expressed himself with greater caution.

The eleventh like the preceding century was an age of shame, darkness, and calamity to the church of Christ. Converts, it is true, were multiplied among the Tartars by the Nestorians: Sicily was regained from the arms and the faith of the Saracens: and some of the Prussians were persuaded, and more dragooned, into a profession of the Gospel. To balance these victories, the Saracens in Spain, and in part of Asia; and the Turks, who in their turn had stripped the Saracens of many of their conquests, and had torn from the Grecian emperor his fairest provinces bordering on the Euxine sea; ensnared or persecuted into apostacy great numbers of Christians. And the Pagans of the Northern countries of Europe omitted no opportunity of wreaking their vengeance on the Christians within their reach. In the mean time new monastic orders arose in the West: and the subtilties of a metaphysical theology, commonly termed scholastic divinity, advanced in repute; and afforded to ignorance and to artifice fit weapons for upholding the grossest superstitions of popery. The contest between the Latin and the Greek church proceeded from bitter animosity to an open schism. The patriarch of Constantinople, A. D. 1053, enraged at the efforts of the pontiff to reduce the Oriental patriarchs under his dominion, accused the Roman church in a public letter, of various errors. The Pope

Leo IX. issued a most imperious reply; assembled a council at Rome; and solemnly excommunicated the Greek churches. The Grecian emperor, whom political exigences rendered not unfavourable to Rome, invited Leo to send legates to Constantinople, that an agreement might be established. Leo complied. But the legates, enraged at the steady resistance made to the arrogant pretensions of their master, publicly excommunicated the Greek patriarch, with all his adherents, in his own cathedral: and laying on the altar a written record of their imprecations and anathemas, shook the dust off their feet, and returned to the Pope. The patriarch retaliated by a similar excommunication.

To rescue the Holy Land, the scene of the ministry, the miracles, and the sufferings of Christ, from the profane power of the Mahometans; and to terminate the insults and oppressions endured by the swarms of pilgrims, who repaired thither from all quarters of the Christian world; were objects which had long excited the solicitude of the pontiffs. Near the close of the preceding century Sylvester II. had ineffectually exhorted the potentates of Europe to take up arms for the attainment of these purposes. Gregory VII. raised to the Pontificate, A. D. 1073, resolved to undertake the holy war in person; and had already mustered fifty thousand followers, when his attention was absorbed by other wars hereafter to be noticed. The enthusiasm at length of Peter the Hermit sounded the alarm throughout Europe. He described in the most pathetic terms the miseries which he had beheld inflicted on the Christians in Palestine; and roused the avenging zeal of every faithful son of the church by producing a letter addressed to all true christians, which he averred to have been written in heaven. Urban II. seized the favourable moment. His speech in the council of Clermont before two hundred bishops, four thousand inferior ecclesiastics, and three hundred thousand laymen, was received as a declaration of the will of God. A countless multitude assumed the cross, the badge of this enterprise of fanaticism and injustice: and the unwieldy host proceeded, A. D. 1096, in different bodies,

towards the city of Constantinople, which trembled at the tidings of the approach of eight hundred thousand armed men. Myriads, however, after signalising their march in the sacred expedition by unparalleled rapine and flagitiousness, perished by famine and the sword before they reached the borders of the Hellespont. Additional myriads perished in their course through Asia Minor and Syria. But the survivors, still forming an immense army, were descried, A. D. 1099, from the walls of Jerusalem advancing under Godfrey, duke of Lorrain, from subordinate conquests to the siege of the Holy City. In five weeks it was taken. The sovereignty of the new Christian kingdom was conferred on the truely heroic and excellent Godfrey.

The effects of these enterprises on the religious state of the European Christians were most lamentable. An enormous accession of wealth instantly accrued to the monasteries and churches. In order to obtain the prayers of monks, and thus to secure the protection of saints, on a distant and perilous expedition, the most ample donations were bestowed; and satisfaction was eagerly tendered for all real or supposed injuries offered to the church by the individual himself or by his ancestors. The sanctity of the undertaking began also to be considered as an atonement for all transgessions of the divine law, and a certain passport to heaven. Bishops and abbots girded on the sword: and the vicious clergy whom they left behind discovered that the absence of their superiors was the removal of restraint. Unknown saints and martyrs, some of whom had never existed, were imported in numbers from Syria into the Western church; and shared the worship that had been monopolised by the ancient occupiers of the calendar.—The armies which returned from the conquest of the Holy Land came loaded with saintly reliques, some of the reliques neither of saints nor of human beings; but all purchased at high prices from the unfailing magazines of the artful Greeks and Syrians, who smiled and exulted at the credulity of Europe.

In this century the Roman pontiffs rose in defiance of civil and ecclesiastical opposition, and of the inter-

nal contests between rival claimants of the papal throne, to the zenith of their power. In the commencement of it they received the magnificent appellation of Masters of the World, and Popes, or Universal Fathers: presided by their legates in all councils: assumed the right of deciding every controversy respecting doctrine and discipline; and resolutely defended their usurpations against princes and kings. Leo IX. who succeeded to the pontificate, A. D. 1048, led the way to the claims urged with unremitting vehemence by his immediate successors, of distributing and taking away kingdoms, and of being temporal as well as spiritual sovereigns of the world, On the Normans, settled in Italy, he formally conferred the lands which they had wrested or were preparing to wrest from the Greek emperor and the Saracens. But the boldest efforts of preceding popes lose their splendor when compared with the exploits of Gregory VII. known by the name of Hildebrand, who was elected to the pontificate A. D. 1073. He unceasingly pursued an enterprise which his predecessors had in vain laboured to accomplish, the subjugation of the whole western world to a uniform reception of the Roman ceremonies and forms of worship; and to the performance of that worship in the Latin language, now become an unknown tongue. His life was occupied by a steady plan of rendering all sovereigns his tributary vassals. Saxony he claimed as a feudal tenure under the Roman see. He told Philip I. king of France, that his kingdom no less than his soul was under the dominion of St. Peter; in other words, of his pretended successor the Roman pontiff. But the tribute which he demanded was denied. He ordered William the Conqueror, who, when about to invade England, had desired the sanction of papal authority, to do homage for that kingdom, and pay up the arrears of Peterpence.* The arrears were paid; the homage was sternly refused. Among the Christian kingdoms gradually forming against the Moors in

* Peter-pence was a tax of a penny per house originally appropriated to the support of an English college at Rome, but afterwards converted by the popes to their own use.

Spain, a country which Gregory affirmed in his letters to have belonged from time immemorial to the see of Rome, though by a grant which he said had been lost with other ancient records, he had more success. The tribute required was annually paid. The kings of Hungary and of Denmark, and the princes of Germany, he openly exhorted to surrender their territories to the apostle Peter, and to hold them as dependencies of the Roman bishop. He induced the son of Demetrius king of the Russians to come to Rome; and to make a similar surrender of the kingdom, which he was to inherit from his father. He raised the duke of Croatia to the regal title, upon the terms of an annual tribute. He excommunicated and deposed Boleslaus II. king of Poland, who had assassinated the bishop of Cracow; and prohibited the nobles and clergy of Poland from electing a new king without his consent. He deprived the emperors of the privilege, never since regained, of ratifying the election of the Roman pontiff. He engaged the princess Matilda to settle her great Italian and other possessions on the see of Rome. Enraged at the opposition which Henry the emperor of Germany presumed to make to the new edict respecting investitures;* he commanded that prince instantly to re-

* When bishoprics and abbeys had become of great value, princes began not only to confer them on unworthy favourites, but to sell them. To counteract these manœuvres, the clergy, to whom the right of election originally belonged, adopted the practice, on any vacancy, of instantly electing and consecrating a successor. The prince soon discovered a method of eluding this restraint. On the death of a bishop or abbot, he required the ring and crosier of the deceased to be delivered to him; knowing that investiture by their means was essential to consecration. He could then make his own terms. Gregory, indignant at these simonical contracts; at the interference of the temporal power in the choice of ecclesiastical rulers; and at the sacrilegious profanation of the ring and crosier by the unsanctified touch of a layman; promulgated an anathema against those who should receive the investiture of a bishopric or abbacy from lay hands, and also against the persons performing such investiture.

pair to Rome and clear himself from the charge. Henry summoned the German bishops to Worms, and induced them to pronounce Gregory deposed from the pontificate. Gregory in return excommunicated and deposed Henry; roused several of the German princes to take arms against him; obliged the unfortunate monarch to pass three days in the depth of winter in the open air, with bare feet, his head uncovered, and his body nearly naked, at the papal threshold, waiting for absolution; and finally confirmed the election of a new emperor, Rodolph. On the sudden death of Rodolph, A. D. 1080 the miseries of the civil war continued, and the affairs of Henry revived. Another pope was elected in opposition to Gregory. On the death, five years afterwards, of the latter, whose character is stained with private vice no less than with inordinate ambition, a successor of his party was chosen: and two hostile popes agitated Europe until the end of the century.

Even in this age, blind and bigoted as it was, the corrupt doctrines of popery were resisted and attacked. The edicts of the tyrannical Gregory VII. against the marriage of the clergy raised commotions in Germany; and were strongly opposed in France, in Flanders, in Italy, and in England. Berangarius of Tours contended against transubstantiation, with unequal constancy, but with signal success. In the face of persecution he shamefully and repeatedly retracted his opinions: but, according to the complaint of the monkish historians, he had corrupted with his *heresy* almost all the French, Italians, and English. And the Albigenses, whose tenets will be considered in reviewing the succeeding century, already began to attract notice.

The twelfth century, though the learning and science of the age, such as they were, began to receive the active support of the princes and great men of the West, and flourished still more under Imperial patronage at Constantinople; displayed the same features which had characterised preceding times. Pomerania, the isle of Bregen, Finland, and Livonia, were instructed in Christianity by the sword. Against the Pagans of the latter province the pontiff Urban III. proclaimed

a holy war. Three successive bishops led the armies, which were raised chiefly in Saxony, to accomplish the work of conversion: and in conjunction with the military order of knights-sword-bearers, instituted afterwards by the direction of pope Innocent III. for the same salutary purpose, succeeded in arrogating to themselves and their associates the plunder of Livonia, and in extorting from the inhabitants a nominal profession of the popish corruptions of the Gospel. In the eastern parts of Asiatic Tartary, John, a Nestorian priest, taking advantage of the death of a Tartarian monarch, acquired by force of arms the vacant throne. Assuming the name of Ungchan, though he is better known by his original appellation of Presbyter (or Prester John;) he announced by embassies to his Christian brothers the Greek and Roman emperors his superiority in grandeur and in power to every other monarch of the earth. The splendid boast expired in the days of his successor; who was overwhelmed by the resistless force of the celebrated Tartar, Genghis Chan. The conqueror, turning his armies against the Turks and Saracens, reduced Cathay, Persia, and part of India and Arabia under his dominion.

Tidings in the mean time arrived in Europe of the declining state of the Christian kingdom of Palestine; and of the cruel, and as they were termed, unprovoked, persecutions, which the professors of the Gospel in the East endured from the Saracens. The pontiffs re-echoed the intelligence from the Mediterranean to the Baltic. At length, A. D. 1147, Louis VII. king of France, and Conrad III. emperor of Germany, departed for the Holy Land at the head of immense armies; with the disgraced and feeble remains of which they returned two years afterwards to Europe. The kings of Jerusalem struggled in vain against the skill and bravery of Saladin. Guy of Lusignan, the last monarch, fell in battle, A. D. 1187: and the city in the same year surrendered to the victor. To repair this calamity, a third expedition was conducted, A. D. 1189, by the German emperor Frederick the first. After some successes, he was drowned: his son and the greater part

of the army were swept away by pestilence: the remainder returned in misery and despair. In the following year Philip Augustus king of France, and Richard I. king of England, proceeded by sea with their armies to the Holy Land. After the reduction of Acre, a city rendered then, as in the present year, memorable by a most obstinate defence, the former returned to Europe. Richard, weakened by every victory which he gained, and alarmed by the domestic perfidy of his brother, concluded a truce, A. D. 1192, with Saladin, and quitted Palestine, with his whole army. During these conflicts between the Christians and the Mahometans three military orders arose: the knights Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem; the knights Templars; and the Teutonic knights of St. Mary. The knights Hospitallers, originally united for the relief of indigent and diseased pilgrims arriving at Jerusalem, acquired such vast resources from the donations of princes and of wealthy subjects, that they took upon themselves, with the approbation and authority of the pontiff, the obligation of perpetual hostility against the followers of Mahomet. In the final ruin of the Christian affairs in Palestine, they retired first to Cyprus, and thence to Rhodes; and being expelled in the sixteenth century from the latter island by the Turks, received from the emperor Charles V. a grant of Malta, which they still retain. The knights Templars were also bound to protect pilgrims, and the Christian cause, by force of arms. The Teutonic knights, who were all to be Germans of illustrious birth, contracted a similar engagement; and were characterised at first, by rules of austerity and frugality, which speedily melted away before the influence of growing wealth. The two latter orders will be noticed again.

In this century many of the popes shewed themselves worthy successors of Gregory VII. Pascal rekindled the dissensions concerning investitures, A. D. 1102, by fresh excommunications against the emperor Henry; whose rebellious son was afterwards absolved from his allegiance, and supported in his unnatural war against his father by the same pontiff. Succeeding emperors,

popes, and antipopes, for there were repeatedly two cotemporary claimants of St. Peter's chair, prolonged the calamities of this contest by temporal as well as spiritual arms; until it was at length adjusted, A. D. 1122, by a compromise. The right of election was relinquished by the emperor: that of investiture, but by the sceptre, not by the ring and crosier, was conceded to him by the pope. New schisms commonly occasioned by turbulence of parties at Rome, divided the papacy: and the competitors were variously acknowledged by different kingdoms. New contests also rose between the pope and the emperor, each eager to reduce the power of the other; in which the emperor was according to custom, excommunicated and deposed. The king of England too, Henry II. received his allotment of the general humiliation. Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, having acceded, A. D. 1164, to certain rules, called the constitutions of Clarendon, which limited some of the exorbitant privileges of the clergy, repented; and suspended himself from his ecclesiastical office, until he should receive absolution for his offence from the pope. Violent contentions ensued; and Becket retired to France. An apparent reconciliation at length took place between the prelate and the king. The archbishop returned to his see; and persisted in his former measures with inflexible arrogance. The king, then in Normandy, heard the account, and dropped expressions of indignation. Four knights of his court listened and departed. The king suspected their purpose: but the messenger whom he dispatched in pursuit of them was too late.* The archbishop was assassinated before the altar. Henry, in obedience to the mandate of the enraged pontiff, presented himself barefooted and prostrate before the shrine of Becket, now revered as a saint and martyr; spent the day in fasting and prayer, and the night in watching by the holy reliques; assembled the monks of the chapter; put a scourge into the hands of each; and received on his naked back the lashes which they successively inflicted.

* See the account in Hume's History of England.

In several respects the authority of the church and the pope increased in strength. A decree, in force at this day, was passed under Alexander III. excluding the Roman people from all power in the election of a pontiff, and vesting the right of voting exclusively in the cardinals. At the same time spiritual wars were first declared against heretics. The right of nominating and canonizing saints was monopolized by the pope. But his greatest and most pernicious power was that of indulgences. Various bishops had for some time augmented their revenues by selling to transgressors these remissions of ecclesiastical penalties. The politic popes discerned the advantage; assumed nearly the whole of the traffic to themselves; and extended it from the temporal chastisements of the church to the future punishments of hell. This prerogative, first employed for the encouragement of the crusades, was vindicated by the blasphemous doctrine, now invented, and improved in the next century; that the Roman pontiff was invested with a power of transferring to any one a portion of an immense treasure of superfluous merit, which the saints by their pious deeds had accumulated, over and above what was requisite for their own salvation.

When sins might thus be expiated by money, and superstitions of every kind were patronized; the vices of the clergy in general, as well as of the laity, advanced to a height of iniquity scarcely credible. Corruption so glaring in doctrine and in practice excited the indignant opposition of those whom it had not blinded. Multitudes now bore witness in behalf of genuine christianity. Among these the Albigenses, so denominated from Albi, a town in France, or Vallenses and Waldenses, from the vallies of Piedmont which they occupied, and sometimes Leonists, from a merchant of Lyons, Peter, surnamed Valdo in consequence of his exertions in their support, were the most conspicuous. They are said in part to have originated from the Paulicians, who retiring into Thrace from the persecution of the Grecian emperors, proceeded through Bulgaria into Italy and the neighbouring parts of Europe. The Albigenses are loaded by many of their

enemies with the imputation of Manichean and other abominable tenets. The truth probably is, that some of the sects into which they were subdivided, and others improperly classed with them by the church of Rome, which indiscriminately branded its opposers with the denomination of Albigenses; held with many just opinions others which were erroneous. To their superior virtues, however, the attestations of their adversaries are afforded.* Among their leading doctrines we find these particularly specified: that scripture is the rule of faith: that the scriptures ought to be open in the vulgar tongue to all: that there are only two sacraments: that masses for the dead are absurd, and the worship of saints and the dead, idolatry: that purgatory is a human invention: that monastic institutions, and the multiplicity of festivals and ceremonies are injurious to religion: that the marriage of the clergy is lawful and necessary: that the pope is entitled to no supremacy: that the church of Rome is the antichristian church described in the Revelations. The historian Thuanus, a catholic, honestly discriminates between the doctrines which the Albigenses held, and those which were falsely ascribed to them. And Mezeray, also a catholic, decisively characterises them thus: "They "had very nearly the same opinions as those persons "who are now called Calvinists;" the usual term in France for protestants.†

In some of the northern and eastern parts of Asia, Christianity, though gradually declining in the face of

* One writer against them says: "Sunt in moribus compositi "& modesti: superbiam in vestibus non habent," &c. Another, "Præter hæc quæ contra fidem religionemque nostram assu- "munt in reliquis ferme puriorem quam cæteri Christiani vi- "tam agunt. Non enim nisi coacti jurant; raròque nomen "Dei in vanum proferunt; promissaque sua bona fide implent," &c. Another, "In moribus & vitâ boni sunt: veraces in ser- "mone: in caritate fraternâ unanimes." Bishop Newton's Dissertations, vol. iii. p. 174, 175, notes.

† Bishop Newton's Dissertations, vol. iii. p. 175, 177. and see the notes.

Mahometan power, still retained, in the thirteenth century, numerous disciples. Embassies also were sent by the Roman pontiffs to the emperors of the Tartars, who had ravaged Hungary and the adjoining countries: and Tartarian ambassadors presented themselves in return before the council held at Lyons. The intercourse produced the establishment of Roman catholic congregations among the heathen; as well as much benefit to the papal cause among the Nestorians, many of whom adopted the doctrines and owned the supremacy of Rome. The Christian sovereigns in Spain enlarged their kingdoms daily at the expence of the Moors. The Prussians, obstinate in Paganism, were invaded by the Teutonic knights; and after a bloody contest of fifty years, acknowledged the religion and the sovereignty of the victors. Lithuania endured the same cruelties, and submitted to the same yoke. The distress of the Christians in Palestine at length overcame the growing reluctance of Europe to Eastern campaigns. The first expedition consisting of French and Venetians, realised the apprehensions of the Greek emperor; who had repeatedly trembled for his sceptre, on the approach of the armies of the West. They stormed Constantinople, A. D. 1203, originally for the purpose of reinstating the rightful prince who had been dethroned: but on his murder in the following year, they seized the city for their own benefit, and elected Baldwin, count of Flanders, emperor of the Greeks. His claim was disputed by the native emperors, who choose Nice in Bithynia for their capital; and after a contest of fifty-seven years recovered Constantinople, A. D. 1261, and put an end to the Eastern empire of the Latins. In the mean time Andrew, king of Hungary, with other princes, had conducted new armies, A. D. 1217, to the aid of Palestine, and commenced their operations in Egypt. After some successes, they experienced the fate of preceding undertakings. Frederic II. emperor of Germany, renewed the enterprise, A. D. 1228: and by treaty in the following year, obtained from the sultan of Egypt the possession of the city and kingdom of Jerusalem. New succours, however became indispensable: and, after two

intervening and unfortunate expeditions, the one under the king of Navarre, A. D. 1239; the other in the subsequent year under Richard, Duke of Cornwall, and brother to the English king, Henry III; the French monarch Louis the IX. landed, A. D. 1249, with a most formidable army in Egypt. After the capture of the strong city of Damietta, a fatal reverse overwhelmed him. Defeated in a bloody action, he was taken prisoner; and only a handful of his forces returned to France. Impelled by misguided pity, he resumed the attempt, A. D. 1270: and commencing his operations against the Mahometans with the siege of Tunis, perished with the greater part of his army by a pestilence. No future sovereign trod in his footsteps. The Christian kingdom of Palestine rapidly declined; and was extinguished, A. D. 1291 by the capture of Acre.

Innocent III. who filled the papal chair during the first sixteen years of this century, equalled the most ambitious of his predecessors in zeal to establish the favourite maxim of Rome; that the pope was by divine right supreme lord of the world, and the fountain of all authority ecclesiastical or civil. He claimed for the Holy See the power of disposing of bishoprics, abbeys, and canonries, lest heretics should intrude into the church of Christ. He reduced under his jurisdiction the prefect of Rome, who until this period had taken an oath of allegiance to the emperor. He made himself master of Ancona, Spoletto, and other Italian cities. In Asia he gave a king to Armenia. In Europe he conferred the regal dignity on the duke of Bulgaria; and also on Peter of Arragon, who had rendered his dominions tributary to Rome. Philip, king of France, he anathematised into compliance with his mandates. Successive emperors of Germany he excommunicated and deposed. But the weight of his fury fell on John, king of England. John refused to recognise, as archbishop of Canterbury, cardinal Langton, whom the pope by his fiat appointed to that dignity. Innocent laid the kingdom under an interdict;* follow-

* The immediate effects of an interdict were, that the celebration of Divine Worship was suspended, and the churches

ed the interdict by a bull absolving the subjects of John from their allegiance, and commanding all men to shun him as excommunicated: declared by another bull the throne vacant, and exhorted Philip of France to invade the kingdom, and unite it for ever to his dominions: and by a third bull excited all Christian princes to aid Philip in the enterprise, and bestowed on every person who should promote it the same plenary remission of all sins as was granted to those who engaged in crusades against the Mahometans. The French monarch made immense preparations: and was already grasping in idea the sceptre of England, when Innocent dexterously seized it for himself. John, alarmed and ensnared by the arts of the legate Pandulf, formally surrendered his kingdom to the See of Rome. After detaining the crown and other ensigns of royalty five whole days, the legate returned them to John, now a papal vassal, who did homage and swore fealty to the representative of Innocent; presented to him, as a mark of dependance, a sum of money, which the latter proudly trampled under his feet; and bound himself and his successors, on pain of forfeiture of the crown, to pay the stipulated annual tribute to Rome. The successors of Innocent imitated him with varying ability. Emperors continued to be deposed, and kingdoms to be granted. The pontificate of Gregory X. was signalised, A. D. 1274, by the subjugation of the Greek church to the See of Rome, through the influence of Michael Palæologus, emperor of Constantinople; who regarded the protection of the pope as a security against a renewal of the Latin invasions. But the ignominious treaty was renounced ten years afterwards by the Greeks; who saw their emperor, like his brethren of the West, excommunicated by the Roman pontiff.

During the course of these transactions, the papacy dictated new laws to the church; and added to its encreasing wealth and territories additional supports, which

were shut up: no sacrament, except baptism, was administered: the dead were buried in highways without funeral rites.

rendered most important service. By Innocent III. A. D. 1215, transubstantiation was solemnly pronounced an indispensable article of faith, and auricular confession an indispensable duty. He promulgated at the same time, and equally without deigning to consult any individual, sixty-eight other decrees extending and confirming the papal power. The decree respecting transubstantiation naturally introduced the idolatrous adoration of what was now blasphemously called the deified bread. Boniface VIII. enacted, that whoever should visit, in the concluding year of each century, the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul at Rome with sentiments of contrition, should thus obtain the plenary remission of sins. His successors in later times, perceiving the lustre and the riches which the centenary crouds of pilgrims added to the church, graciously reduced by degrees the period to twenty-five years. But greater things remain to be stated. In the course of the century there arose several orders of mendicant friars; men who disclaimed endowments and revenues, and professed voluntary poverty. The contrast which their seeming humility exhibited to the luxury and pomp of other monastic orders; and its resemblance to the lowly circumstances of Christ and his apostles, won the public favour. But the two orders founded, the one by Dominic, a Spaniard, the other by Francis, an Italian, took the lead in general estimation: and notwithstanding their bitter contests with each other for pre-eminence, and the internal hostilities no less bitter of the Franciscans among themselves, they not only reigned unrivalled in the unintelligible jargon of scholastic divinity, but almost monopolised until the reformation the chief offices in the church and in the state. The popes, whose policy had long been accustomed to favour the monks, in order to press down into due subordination the influence and authority of bishops; warmly patronised the Dominicans and the Franciscans. The protection was abundantly repaid by ceaseless exertions for the extension of the papal power. These exertions came very opportunely. Heretics, that is to say, opponents of Rome, consisting partly of the

Albigenses and similar sects, partly of blind or criminal fanatics, swarmed on all sides. Against these enemies the Dominicans in particular, whose avowed object was to extirpate error and to destroy heretics, declared war. This expression was by no means figurative. Innocent III. exasperated at the unwillingness or the incapacity of the bishops to repress the numerous adversaries of popery in Savoy, Dauphine, and the rest of the dominions of Raymond earl of Thoulouse, dispatched thither special legates for the extirpation of heresy. They were joined, A. D. 1206, by Dominic; and by the sole authority of the pope inflicted capital punishment on those whom they could not reclaim. They were speedily distinguished by the appellation of inquisitors. Sensible of the value of their services, succeeding pontiffs established similar officers in every suspected city, and reduced the system into form. Gregory IX. however, A. D. 1233, committed the inquisitorial office and jurisdiction exclusively to the Dominicans. Thus arose the tremendous tribunal of the inquisition; which soon renouncing the common forms of trial borrowed at first from courts of justice, arrayed itself in darkness, and let loose its merciless tortures on the slightest suspicion of guilt. But with respect to the heretics of Thoulouse, Innocent waited not for the tardy operations of these ministers of vengeance. The extirpation by fire and sword of the devoted victims he committed, A. D. 1207, to the king of France and his armies, under the promise of the most ample *indulgences:* and shortly afterwards commissioned the Cistercian monks to proclaim, as from himself, throughout France, this crusade against Christians. A formidable army of cross-bearers took the field, A. D. 1209, under the eye of a papal legate, and the command of Simon earl of Montfort. Raymond, at one time trembling under excommunication, at another provoked to desperation by the ambitious designs of Montfort, was alternately the destroyer and the defender of his subjects. The war, in which Louis IX. ultimately embarked with the utmost ardour, continued many years with various success, but with unrelenting barbarity against the opposers of the pontiff.

Victory at length crowned the supporters of the church. And the earl of Thoulouse saw the pious labours of the pope and the French king rewarded with no small portions of his dominions.*

* In this century Robert Greathead, bishop of Lincoln, distinguished himself by his exertions against papal tyranny and the vices of ecclesiastics. Matthew Paris, a cotemporary monk of St. Albans, relates his dying discourses, in which the prelate stigmatised the pope as an heretic and antichrist: and concludes with styling him "the refuter of the pope, reprover of prelates, "corrector of monks, director of priests, instructor of the clergy, and the hammer to beat down the Romans into contempt." When excommunicated by the pope, he appealed to the tribunal of Christ. See bishop Newton's Dissertations, vol. iii. p. 181.

CHAPTER XI.

CONTINUATION OF CHRISTIAN HISTORY TO THE PRESENT TIME.

THOUGH the Christian world had still continued during the two preceding centuries, overwhelmed with the darkness of papal night; some glimmerings of twilight had begun to appear. We now advance to times in which the indications of approaching dawn continually grew stronger; until at length it broke forth and brightened into the radiance of perfect day.

During the fourteenth century several pontiffs laboured to rekindle the flame of the crusades against the Saracens. But, after several antecedent disappointments, they had the mortification to see the last of the armies about to be embarked for Palestine dispersed, A. D. 1363, by the death of its leader John, king of France. The Mahometan power in different quarters daily became more formidable. Among the Asiatic Tartars, one of whose chans had now honoured the pope with a solemn embassy to Avignon; and in China, whose capital Cambalu, the present city of Pekin, was the residence of an archbishop, Christianity was extirpated by the victorious TimurBeg, who faithfully exerted against the professors of the Gospel the persecuting spirit of the Koran. In Constantinople the necessity of the assistance of the West to withstand the encroaching hostility of the Turks was so apparent, that scarcely any sacrifices for the purpose of obtaining it were thought too great. Three successive embassies were sent to different pontiffs to prepare the way for the union of the two churches. Rome, at length, beheld within her walls, A. D. 1367, the Grecian patriarch negociating for his own submission to the pope. The patriarch was followed two years afterwards by a nobler suitor, the Greek emperor himself. But the majority of his

subjects dreaded and abhorred the Turks less than the pontiff: and the treaty evaporated in furious debates.

Though several of the pontiffs of this century exerted themselves no less fiercely than their predecessors in excommunicating and deposing emperors and kings; and extended under the names of reserves and provisions the claims of the papacy to fill up ecclesiastical vacancies of all kinds and in every quarter: the authority of the holy see encountered some shocks by which it was manifestly impaired. The first of these concussions took place in the quarrel between the popes and the king of France. Boniface VIII. having acquainted the world in a memorable bull, that the successor of St. Peter ruled the earth, by Divine right, with the temporal sword, no less than the church with the spiritual; and that every man who presumed to question this doctrine was excluded from the possibility of salvation: was accused, A. D. 1303, of heresy and other crimes, by the command of the French monarch Philip the Fair; and afterwards seized and wounded by one of the officers of Philip. On the subsequent vacancy of the papal chair, A. D. 1305, Philip by his manœuvres procured the election of Clement V. a French prelate; who, at the desire of the king, transferred the papal residence from Rome to Avignon, where it continued during seventy years, denominated by the Italians the Babylonian captivity. By this long absence the power of the pontiffs experienced in Italy considerable diminution. Formidable factions established themselves even in Rome: and many cities revolted from their allegiance. French ecclesiastics continued to succeed to the popedom; until another event gave a fresh blow to the papal authority. On the death of Gregory XI. A. D. 1378, Urban VI. was chosen to succeed him. But a party of the cardinals, speedily repenting of the choice, professed to discover a flaw in the election; and raised a rival, Clement VII. to the pontificate. Thus began the great schism, which divided the Western church during fifty years. The reverence of the Catholic world was claimed at the same moment by two, sometimes by three, competitors; each asserting his own plenary

apostolical authority, and fulminating anathemas against his opposers. A third source of detriment to the papal dominion may be traced to the new hostilities which raged between its most useful adherents, the Dominicans and the Franciscans concerning the antient subject of their dissensions, the absolute poverty of Christ. John XXII, unfortunately decided, that Christ was not altogether without a certain species of property in the clothes which he wore, and the food by which he was sustained. Every true Franciscan ear tingled at the blasphemous assertion. The same pontiff also presumed to mitigate in some respects the rigid institutions of St. Francis. The Franciscans exclaimed that the rules of their founder were an enspired Gospel imparted to him by Christ, and unalterable by man. John, in a transport of rage, denounced his curses on the apostate contemners of his authority: and the Dominican inquisitors were the eager instruments of his vengeance. Not even Jews or judicial astrologers were hunted with greater fury. France, Spain, Italy, Germany, saw numbers of the Franciscans perish at the stake. Succeeding pontiffs at last owned the prudence of more lenient measures: and by mutual concessions peace was restored between the Franciscan order and the holy see. The increase, partly of mystics and other fanatical sects, partly of sects who deserted the yet unknown appellation of Protestants, must be enumerated as a fourth cause of injury to the sovereignty of the pontiff. In every quarter the inquisitors chased their victims with fury alike a stranger to mercy and to weariness. But the reviving crop sprung up too rapidly to be kept down by the scythe of the church. And the list of the enemies of popery now acquired an unexampled force by the accession of the name of Wicliff.

John Wicliff was born A. D. 1324, in the reign of Edward II. Having distinguished himself at Oxford by supporting the privileges of the university against the encroachments of the Mendicant Friars, settled within its precincts; he was appointed warden of the new college of Canterbury-Hall. Being ejected from that station by the archbishop of Canterbury who suc-

ceeded the founder, he appealed to the pope. Edward III. in the mean time withdrew, with the approbation of his parliament, the tribute which John had engaged to pay to the see of Rome. The pope menaced; and the clergy in general clamoured on his side. Wicliff, in a spirited treatise, opposed the papal claim: and his cause was immediately decided at Rome against him. Wicliff, dissatisfied with the scholastic commentators, had long been a diligent student of the Scriptures. Shocked at the scandalous lives of the monastic clergy, and at the temporal usurpations of the Romish church; he the more easily became sensible of several of the doctrinal corruptions of popery. The errors which he detected were the subjects of his pointed animadversion from the chair of the professorship of divinity, to which he had now been elected. Of that post also he was in consequence deprived. John of Ghent, duke of Lancaster, governed England at this period for his feeble father Edward III. The popish clergy he detested: and regarding Wicliff as one of the victims, took him into confidence; and sent him with the bishop of Bangor at the head of an embassy to Bruges, to reclaim the national right of conferring ecclesiastical benefices, with the general liberties of the English church, from the papal commissioners; who acceded, and paid no regard, to a compromising treaty. The insight which Wicliff gained on this occasion into the proceedings of Rome, contributed to open his eyes. On his return he became rector of Lutterworth in Leicestershire. Scarcely had he repaired thither, when a prosecution for heresy was commenced against him, under the auspices of the archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of London. He was rescued by the forcible interposition of the duke of Lancaster. On the accession of Richard II. the power of Lancaster expired: and five papal bulls instantly reached the two prelates, the king, and the university of Oxford, requiring the condign punishment of Wicliff. Lancaster again contrived to save him. He now sent forth into the world the noble work on which he had been for years employed, a translation, the first complete translation which ever appeared in our lan-

guage, of the Bible. The clergy were thunderstruck at the profane exposure of the Scriptures: and the bishops brought a bill into parliament for the suppression of the book. Scarcely had they beheld the rejection of the bill by a great majority, when they heard that Wicliff was preaching against transubstantiation. At Oxford they rallied their forces; procured the condemnation of Wicliff's tenets; and obliged him finally to retire from the university, which he had still continued occasionally to visit. He withdrew to Lutterworth; and died A. D. 1384. The seed which he had sown made rapid progress during his life: and ripened after his death into a glorious harvest.*

Among the heretics of this century the first place would be due, if accusations were to be accounted proofs, to the Knights Templars. Philip the Fair could not forgive the assistance which they had afforded to his enemy Boniface VIII. Of Clement V. whom he raised to the popedom, he required their destruction. At an appointed time, A. D. 1307, they were seized, unsuspicious of danger, throughout Europe. Blasphemy, apostacy, idolatry, and the most detestable vices, were laid to their charge. The knights who refused to confess were put to death: they, from whom tortures or promises obtained an acknowledgment of guilt, were set at liberty. By the council of Vienne, A. D. 1311, the order was abolished. Of its vast possessions part was bestowed on the knights of St. John: and the remainder, situated in various countries, was confiscated for the use of princes and kings.

In the fifteenth century the church appeared to receive some extension by the nominal subjugation of all Spain to the Christian faith. Ferdinand, having extinguished the last of the Saracenic kingdoms by the conquest of Grenada, A. D. 1492; compelled by persecution, great numbers of Moors, as well as of Jews, to assume an outward profession of the Gospel. In that year too Columbus, by the discovery of America,

* For a full and impartial statement of the opinions and conduct of Wicliff, see Gilpin's Lives of the Reformers.

opened a new hemisphere to Christianity. A dreadful calamity had, in the mean time, overwhelmed a large portion of the Christian world. The Grecian empire, which for several ages had been shrinking into narrower and narrower limits before the face of the Turks, now shook Europe with its fall. Constantinople was taken A. D. 1453, by the sultan Mahomet II. The Asiatic provinces were already his: and the European dependencies of the capital followed its fate. Over the scenes of the ministry of Christ and of the labours of his apostles; over Palestine, and Syria, Asia Minor, and Macedonia, and Achaia, and Attica, and the rest of Greece, the crescent of Mahomet now shone triumphant. Ephesus and Smyrna, and the surrounding cities, cherished by the affectionate superintendence of St. John; Corinth and Thessalonica, and Philippi, and Colosse, and Galatia, instructed by the ardent zeal, and confirmed by the animating epistles of St. Paul; now alike beheld their churches demolished or converted into mosques: and the conscientious remnant which adhered to the Gospel, precariously retaining the exercise of its religion, in corners, under tribute, infamy, and oppression. At the close of the eighteenth century Christian Europe has still the same awful scene to contemplate: and may read in the fate of these once highly favoured regions the judgments which await herself, unless, renouncing her corruptions, she turns in purity of faith and practice to Him who "is no respecter of persons."

Yet in some particulars the ruin of the Eastern empire contributed ultimately to the advantage of genuine Christianity. The literature of the Greeks, however infected with their characteristic subtleties and other defects, was far superior to that of the West. Their learned men, flying from the Turkish power, carried with them into exile their knowledge, together with many of their books. Presenting themselves in Italy and the neighbouring kingdoms, where a taste of learning had gradually taken root; pitied for their sufferings, and patronised for their acquirements: and on many occasions taking upon themselves the office of instructors for the purpose of gaining a subsistance:

they universally excited a thirst for improvement, and a passion for investigation, which extremely facilitated in the next century the progress of the reformers. The general diffusion and desire of knowledge received about the same period the most signal aid and encouragement, by the discovery of the art of printing invented about A. D. 1440, by Coster of Haerlem, and speedily improved by Guttemberg of Strasburgh, and Schoeffer of Mentz.*

In the Roman church the great schism continued. After an ineffectual attempt to close it by the council of Pisa, which excommunicated and deposed the two contending pontiffs, and elected a third; a general council was assembled, A. D. 1414, at Constance, through the exertions of Sigismund, emperor of Germany. By two of its decrees the Pope was declared inferior and subject to the assembled delegates of the universal church. The three competitors, after fruitless struggles, resigned or were deposed; and Martin V. was raised to the papal throne. The zeal of the council was at the same time directed with equal ardor to another object; the destruction of John Huss. Huss, a native of Prague was appointed, A. D. 1408, rector of the university in that city. He became acquainted with some of the writings of Wicliff; and did not conceal his admiration of them. The neighbouring clergy, to whose lives the piety of Huss was a conspicuous contrast, complained to Rome: and Huss without being heard, was excommunicated. He daily received additional countenance and respect in Bohemia, and from persons of the highest classes. At this period John XXIII, being at war with the king of Naples, dispatched a legate to Prague, as to other places, to raise troops by granting indulgences. The spirited writings of Huss ruined the levy. Accused of heresy, he was required to attend the council of Constance; and received from Sigismund an imperial safe-conduct, specifically guaranteeing both his journey thither and his return. On his road through Germany he was welcomed from city to city with the highest reverence. When he arrived at Constance, he

* See the Translator's note, Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 392.

was thrown, after a trifling examination before the pope and cardinals, into a dungeon and loaded with fetters. Unceasing exertions were made by his enemies to obtain from Sigismund a retraction of his safe-conduct, and to procure from the council the condemnation of Huss. Both attempts were successful. Petitions signed in Bohemia by nearly all the nobles and gentlemen of the kingdom, claiming the faith of the Imperial promise, were presented to the council and to the emperor in vain. Huss, though he appears to have held several of the leading doctrines of the Romish Church; refusing to acknowledge the supremacy of the Pope, and to admit in their full extent other Romish tenets, was condemned to the stake. Seven bishops immediately advanced to perform the ceremony of his degradation from the priestly office, antecedently to his execution. Each prelate adding a curse, took off a part of the sacerdotal garments of their victim. The scene was closed by one of the bishops; who placing a cap, painted with forms of fiends, on the head of Huss, cried out: "Hereby we commit thy soul to the devil." Huss smiled and answered, "It is less painful than a "crown of thorns." He was immediately burned; and his ashes scattered into the Rhine. His disciple, Jerome of Prague, who on hearing of his master's danger, hastened to his comfort, was at first terrified at the prospect of death, and recanted. But he was soon restored to Christian fortitude, and encountered martyrdom with joy.* The remains of Wicliff had already experienced the vengeance of the fathers of Constance. His bones, by their command, were dug up, and committed with his works to the flames. The council, having decreed that the laity should no longer receive the cup at the holy sacrament, and disappointed all Europe by postponing that reformation of the church which it had originally averred to be its principal purpose, was dissolved, A. D. 1418.

Five years afterwards the encreasing cry for reformation constrained the reluctant Martin V. to assem-

* For an account of the life, opinions, and death of Huss, and of Jerome of Prague, consult Gilpin's Lives of the Reformers.

ble a council at Pavia, which was ultimately removed to Basil. Its boldness and zeal filled the succeeding pontiff, Eugenius IV. with alarm. To elude the danger, he assembled a rival council at Ferrara, and excommunicated its opponent; which despised his thunders, and elected another pontiff. During ten years this new schism divided the kingdoms of Europe. In the mean time Eugenius enjoyed the personal solicitations of the Greek patriarch and emperor, shuddering at the menaces of the Turks, for ecclesiastical amity and temporal protection. Rigorous conditions were prescribed and accepted. The Greeks acknowledged that the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Son as well as from the Father: that purgatorial fire awaits the souls of the righteous: that unleavened bread may be used in the sacrament, and that the Roman pontiff reigns supreme over the universal church. On their return to Constantinople they disclaimed the treaty: and the schism is still unclosed at this day. Of the remaining pontiffs of this century two require briefly to be noticed. Æneas Sylvius, who had strenuously supported at Basil the pre-eminence of councils over popes, becoming possessed of the papal throne, published, A. D. 1463, a complete recantation of his former declarations: and shamelessly avowed that as Æneas Sylvius he was "a "damnable heretic," but as Pius II. an orthodox pontiff. Alexander VI. whose name was Borgia, was one of those monsters of guilt, which the world has rarely witnessed., "His life and actions shew," says Mosheim, "that there was a Nero among the popes as well as "among the emperors."

The more austere part of the Franciscan sect, known by the name of Minorites, again renounced the allegiance, and roused the fury of the pontiffs; who in vain employed imprisonment, exile, civil magistrates, armies, and inquisitors to subdue their obstinacy. The Flagellants, a sect of fanatics, the Waldenses, and other contemners of Rome, were also committed in numbers to the flames. In Bohemia the followers of Huss took up arms for the maintenance of their religion, and the ex-

clusion of the emperor Sigismund from the throne of that kingdom. Under their renouned leader, Zisca, they defeated year after year, with immense slaughter, the Imperial armies. After the death of Zisca they were ruined by internal dissension. Divided into hostile parties, one of which granted, while the other denied, the sacramental cup to the laity, they turned their arms against each other. Sigismund, recovering from despair, easily reduced the vanquished and the victors. In England the disciples of Wicliff multiplied so rapidly, that, in the language of the monkish writers, if you met two persons upon the road, you might be certain that one of them was a Lollard : a term of reproach borrowed from the Germans, among whom it was used to signify a singer of hymns. Their most eminent patron was Oldcastle Lord Cobham, a nobleman of extraordinary talents and undaunted piety ; and high in the favor of Henry V. until the malevolent artifices of the Romish clergy alienated the regard of the king. Cobham, abandoned to the fury of the ecclesiastical order now elated by having recently obtained from the parliament a law for the destruction of heretics ; and calumniously charged with a treasonable conspiracy, escaped from the Tower into Wales. After four years his retreat was discovered. He was dragged to St. Giles's Fields ; suspended in chains upon a gallows ; and as a traitor and a heretic, burned alive.*

The early part of the sixteenth century witnessed an event the most glorious that had occurred since the apostolic age, the reformation of corrupted Christianity by the blessing of God on the exertions of Luther and his associates. Luther, a man distinguished for talents scriptural knowledge, and piety, was professor of divinity in the university of Wittemberg in Saxony. Tetzel, an agent of Leo X. arrived there, A. D. 1517, with a commission from the pontiff to grant plenary indulgences to every person who should contribute to the

* See the Life of Lord Cobham, and also of Zisca, by Mr. Gilpin.

expence of building the Roman cathedral of St. Peter. Luther, scandalised at this venal remission of all sins, past, present, or to come,* exposed with vehement indignation the impious traffic from the pulpit and the press. His arguments and his boldness were equally admired throughout Germany. Leo, naturally fond of ease, and occupied in the pursuits of pleasure and ambition, despised what he deemed a mere squabble among monks. He was roused by the tidings of Luther's rapid success; and by the clamours of the popish ecclesiastics for aid and for vengeance. The papal legate in Germany summoned Luther into his presence, and commanded him to recant. Luther refused to retract antecedently to conviction. As yet he had no thoughts of questioning the supremacy of the pope; nor any suspicions of the radical corruptions of the Romish church. But those corruptions are so linked together, and so dependent one upon another, that the discovery of one naturally and almost necessarily draws after it the detection of more. Such was the progress in the mind of Luther. While attempts at accomodation were taking place in Germany, the pontiff, instigated by the impatient fury of those around him, issued a bull, A. D. 1520, denouncing destruction against Luther as an excommunicated heretic, unless he should recant within sixty days. The reformer, firmly convinced that the church of Rome is the idolatrous and antichristian church of the Apocalypse, immediately and publicly relinquished its communion. In the mean time he was encouraged by the successes of a distant coadjutor. The sale of indulgences at Zurich stirred up the spirit of Zuinglius, a man equal to Luther in zeal and intrepidity, and more speedily convinced of the duty of renouncing the Romish Church. His efforts were ably seconded by other learned men: and the reformation established itself rapidly in the greater part of Switzerland. In the following year Luther was required to appear before his avowed enemy, the emperor Charles V. in the diet at Worms. Unmoved by the apprehensions of

* See the form of the Indulgences at full length in Robertson's History of Charles V. 8vo. 1782, vol. iii. p. 107, note.

his friends, who reminded him of the fate of Huss, he instantly obeyed: acknowledged that his writings had occasionally been violent and acrimoneous: but refused to retract his opinions, until they should be proved erroneous by the Scriptures. An edict, pronouncing him an excommunicated criminal, and commanding the seizure of his person as soon as the duration of the safe-conduct which he had obtained should have expired, was immediately promulgated. Frederick the Wise, elector of Saxony, who had countenanced him without professing his doctrines now withdrew him from the storm. As Luther was returning from Worms, a troop of horse-men in masks rushed from a wood, seized him, and conveyed him to the castle of Wartburg; where he was concealed during nine months, encouraging his adherents by his pen, and cheered in return by accounts of the rapid diffusion of his doctrines. John the successor of Frederick, took a decisive step; and established the reformed religion, A. D. 1527, throughout his dominions, under the eye of Luther and of the mild and excellent, though sometimes too timid, Melancthon. In a diet at Spires, held about the same time, the execution of the edict of Worms against the Lutherans, at present too formidable to be oppressed with impunity, was suspended until the convocation of a general council to remedy the disorders of the church. But in another diet held at the same place, A. D. 1529, the suspension was revoked by a decree obtained through the influence of Charles, who now found himself at leisure to push forward his views against the supporters of the reformation. Against this new decree the electors of Saxony and Brandenburgh the landgrave of Hesse, several other princes, and thirteen Imperial cities and towns, solemnly protested. Hence the appellation of Protestants became common to all who embraced the reformed religion. At the diet of Augsburgh in the following year, a clear statement of the reformed faith drawn up by Luther and Melancthon, was presented on behalf of the Protestant members of the empire. It obtained the name of the confession of Augsburg. By this time Sweden had com-

pletely adopted the reformed tenets which had likewise obtained perfect toleration in Denmark, where they were adopted some years afterwards as the doctrines of the national church. They were also daily gaining converts in other kingdoms of Europe.

The protestant princes of Germany, continually receiving fresh tokens of the hostile designs of the emperor, united at Smalcald, A. D. 1530, in a confederacy for the mutual defence of their religion. Charles, whose measures were not yet mature, temporised. In the beginning of the year 1546 Luther died. At that time also, the procrastinating evasions of the pope being exhausted, the long expected general council assembled at Trent. The protestants, however, refused to attend or obey a council convoked in the name and by the authority of the pope, and governed by his legates. Charles assembled troops on all sides; and concluded a treaty with the pope for the destruction of the reformed religion and its adherents. The protestants could no longer be amused, and took the field. Charles was completely successful. The elector of Saxony was deprived of his dominions, which were given to his nephew Maurice, whose perfidy had ruined the protestant cause; and was treated with cruelty and insult, and detained prisoner. The landgrave of Hesse threw himself on the mercy of the emperor. Charles, shamefully violating the treaty concluded between them, kept him also in confinement; where his indignant fretfulness, succeeded by offers of unqualified submission to the Imperial will, was strongly contrasted by the pious resignation and firmness of the deposed elector. The emperor now proceeded to complete his triumph. A rule of faith, denominated the Interim, because it was intended to remain in force only until a general council should terminate the disputes concerning religion; and containing under a specious form all the essential doctrines of the church of Rome; was promulgated by the emperor's command, and enforced by his arms nearly throughout Germany. His career was at length stopped by an unsuspected foe. Maurice of Saxony, stung by the universal reproaches of the protestants; enraged

at the Imperial breach of faith towards the langrave of Hesse, his father-in-law; and convinced that Charles was meditating nothing less than the entire subjugation of the civil and religious liberties of Germany; took his measures with the insidiousness belonging to his character, and suddenly appeared in arms with a force, which Charles was wholly unprepared to resist. The consequences were "The Religious Peace," established A. D. 1555, by the diet at Augsburg; and the complete security of religious freedom to the protestant states. During the course of these events the reformed opinions were extending their influence in various other countries. They acquired many friends, even in Italy. They privately diffused themselves in Spain, notwithstanding the crowded dungeons and busy flames of the inquisition. In France they had still more ample success. At Geneva they were firmly established by Calvin. But their principal triumph was in Great Britain. When Luther first declared war against the pope, Henry VIII. proud of his theological might, rushed into the battle. His Treatise on the Seven Sacraments was repaid by the enraptured pontiff with praise little inferior to that of inspiration: and with the title of Defender of the Faith, which in a sense diametrically opposite, and by a claim of higher desert belongs in modern times to his successors. But Henry was faithful in allegiance only to his passions. In process of time he felt scruples, increased by his growing attachment to Anne Boleyn, as to the lawfulness of his long-established marriage with Catherine, who had originally been contracted to his brother; and solicited the pope for a divorce. The pope, balancing the displeasure of Henry against the indignation of the emperor Charles, the nephew of the queen, procrastinated a decision. After bearing the papal delays during six years, Henry lost all patience. The opinions of universities, learned men, and rabbis, in various parts of Europe, collected by the advice of Cranmer, now archbishop of Canterbury, had declared the marriage unlawful: and the sentence of divorce was pronounced by that prelate. The pope threatened excommunication. Henry

replied by an appeal to a general council. The appeal was notified to the pope, then at Marseilles, by Bonner, of sanguinary memory, with his characteristic violence. The pontiff, not less outrageous, talked of throwing the audacious messenger into a cauldron of melted lead: and Bonner returned precipitately to England. By the interposition of Francis I. the French king, hopes of a favourable sentence, on submission within a limited time, were held forth to Henry from the pope: and Bellay, bishop of Bayonne, was dispatched by Francis to soothe Henry into compliance. Bellay succeeded. The pope, with difficulty, restrained himself until the appointed day. It arrived without tidings from Henry: and the pontiff eagerly annulled the divorce. Two days afterwards the messenger, who had been retarded by adverse winds, appeared with the submission. But the decrees of infallibility were irrevocable. Henry heard the news, and assembled his parliament. The papal supremacy was renounced; and the king declared head of the church. Henry soon cast his eye on the wealth of the monasteries. A rigorous inquiry into their internal state was instituted.—Scandalous enormities were discovered: all the religious houses were terrified or compelled into a surrender of themselves and their possessions to the king: and the parliament sanctioned their downfall. Henry, however, was no protestant. Power he loved, and plunder: but in doctrines, avowedly continued attached to the faith which he had defended. All the changes in the public worship which were introduced during his reign were effected by the piety and conciliating influence of Cranmer, almost against the wishes of a persecuting tyrant, who would scarcely suffer any one to think differently from him on any subject, yet preserved towards the prelate a warm and uniform regard. The archbishop was obliged to proceed gradually, and with caution: and was repeatedly driven back from points which he had gained. He began by reforming the abuses of his own ecclesiastical courts, by diminishing the number of holidays; and by attempting to improve the wretched state of public preaching, and to lessen the credit of various parts of

the popular superstition. He directed, with the authority of the convocation, that the creed, the ten commandments, and the Lord's prayer, should be taught in English; and prevailed on Henry to allow the use of some other prayers in the vulgar tongue. But his great work was the printing of an English Bible founded on the version of Wicliff, now become obsolete, and that of Tindal, which had recently been published abroad. The translation was licensed by the king; and fixed to a desk in the churches. The ardour with which it was received was extreme. The churches were filled with crowds to read or to hear it: and many persons learned to read in their old age, that they might at length peruse the word of God. The catholics besieged Henry and the parliament for the suppression of the book: but could not entirely succeed. On the death of Henry the reformation began to advance in earnest during the short reign of his successor. But when Mary ascended the throne all was reversed. Latimer, and Ridley, and Hooper, and Ferrar, and Rogers, and other eminent protestants, with numbers of their followers sealed their faith with their blood. Switzerland and the Low Countries were filled with English exiles, who fled for their lives. Cranmer, like St. Peter, fell in the hour of trial: and like St. Peter, "wept bitterly," and repented. At the stake, as the smoke was removed by the wind, he was seen stretching forth his right hand, with which he had signed a recantation, into the midst of the flames; and was heard exclaiming, "That hand "offended; that unworthy hand!"—The accession of Elizabeth dispelled the storm: and the reformed religion was immediately established throughout her dominions. In the course of these changes Ireland followed the steps of the sister kingdom.* Two years af-

* The shedding of blood in Ireland, under queen Mary, was providentially prevented by the following singular, yet authentic incident. Mary dispatched Dr. Cole thither, with a commission for the destruction of Protestanism. At Chester Cole, discoursing with the mayor, pointed to a box, and said—"Here is a commission that shall lash the heretics of Ireland."

terwards, A. D. 1559, John Knox introduced the reformation from Geneva into Scotland; where it rapidly prevailed over all opposition, and was established according to the Calvinistic model. One of its principal supporters was the earl of Cassilis. That nobleman, having been taken prisoner by the English, A. D. 1542, at the battle of Solway Moss, was conveyed to London, and committed by Henry to the care of Cranmer; from whom he imbibed the principles of protestantism. England also rendered very important and timely assistance to the protestant cause in the Low Countries. Those provinces then belonged to Spain. The relentless cruelty of Philip, aiming to root out the reformed religion by the inquisition and the sword, found a worthy agent in the blood-thirsty duke of Alva. The Protestants, at length, took up arms in defence of their lives and liberties, under William, prince of Orange. In the course of a long and most eventful war the succours of Elizabeth were among their most powerful encouragements. Upon the death of William, on whose head Philip had set a price, by the pistol of an assassin, A. D. 1584; his place was supplied by his son Maurice. At the close of the contest, A. D. 1609, the seven maritime or Dutch provinces were established in civil and religious liberty. In the mean time the protestants in France had been compelled to defend themselves by force of arms. The civil war was attended with various success. At last the French court, despairing of conquest, had recourse to perhaps the blackest treachery that stains the annals of mankind. By a feigned accommodation, and by the most insidious testimonies of

The mistress of the house, who was a protestant, and had a protestant brother in Dublin, heard the expression; and in the absence of the Doctor, took away the commission, and substituted a pack of cards, with the knave of clubs uppermost. Cole pursued his journey and made the discovery in the privy council chamber at Dublin. He returned in confusion to England for a new commission, and on his way to Ireland with it, was stopped by tidings of the queen's death.—See Mosheim, vol. iv. p. 128, the Translator's Note.

favour, Charles IX. king of France ensnared the Protestant leaders to Paris. On the eve of the festival of St. Bartholomew, A. D. 1572, they were there massacred, with above five hundred men of rank, and nearly ten thousand persons of inferior condition. Orders were dispatched to all the provinces for a similar execution: and Rouen, Lyons, and many other cities emulated the horrors of the capital. The survivors flew to arms. Five years afterwards the famous Catholic league was formed against the protestants, who, under Henry king of Navarre, withstood its fiercest efforts. Henry was assisted with large sums of money by Elizabeth. He succeeded, A. D. 1589, to the throne of France; and four years afterwards, sacrificing conscience to policy, renounced the protestant faith. In A. D. 1598, however, he granted to the protestants, by the edict of Nantes, the secure enjoyment of their religion and of their civil rights.

The active spirit of enquiry, natural to men who had just broken loose from the despotism of popery, operating differently on different intellects and dispositions, almost necessarily produced a variety of sects; and in some cases extreme wildness and extravagance of unscriptural doctrine and practice. One great source of contention respected ceremonies and church government. Some protestant churches, regarding with abhorrence whatever had been an appendage of the Romish religion, renounced, together with ancient rites, the primeval institution of episcopacy. Others were of opinion that it was more wise to preserve whatever was in itself innocent, and to be content with the removal of corruptions. Points of doctrine, too, caused divisions. And the controversies among the reformers, some of whom long retained a portion of the virulent spirit of popery, were too often conducted, even when they related to matters of secondary importance, with the violence and acrimony by which, in opposing the Roman catholics, a good cause had been disgraced.* Among

* Many of the writings of Luther himself abound in the scurrilous invective almost universal in the age in which he lived. The persecuting spirit of popery infected many protestants. The

the fanatical sects of this age, the turbulent German anabaptists, or Mennonites, stand pre-eminent. Among the sects remarkable only for receding the most in doctrine both from the catholics and the mass of protestants, the Socinians, who derive their name from two teachers, an uncle and a nephew of the name of Socinus, are conspicuous. They denied the divinity of Christ and of the Holy Ghost, and other leading doctrines of Christianity. Their principal settlements were in Poland, whence they spread into Hungary and Transilvania. In mentioning the new religious communities of the sixteenth century, a Romish order, that of the Jesuits, must not be forgotten. It was founded by Igna-

death of Servetus is an indelible stain on the memory of Calvin? Even the mild Cranmer perfuaded the reluctance of Edward VI. to consent to two executions at the stake. Some of the doctrines of popery adhered long to particular minds. Cranmer believed in transubstantiation until within some few years of his death. And Luther, though he relinquished that tenet, embraced and retained the kindred and equally unscriptural and absurd doctrine of consubstantiation.

The spirit of our own church from the reformation to the present time is briefly described with justice and candour by Bishop Porteus.—"Although, after it had shaken off the galling yoke of popery, it could not of a sudden divest itself of all its ancient hereditary prejudices: although it was a considerable length of time before it could fancy itself secure against the protestant separatists without that body-guard of pains and penalties, with which it had been accustomed to see itself as well as every church in Europe surrounded: yet even in the plenitude of authority, and when its ideas and exercise of ecclesiastical discipline were at the highest, it stands chargeable with fewer acts of extravagant severity than any other established church, of the same magnitude and power, in the Christian world. By degrees, however, as it improved in knowledge, it improved in mildness too. The last century saw the beginning, and the present times have seen the farther extension, of a most noble system of religious liberty, which has placed legal toleration on its true basis: a measure no less consonant to sound policy than to the spirit of Christianity." Sermons, edit. 2d, vol. I. p. 292.

tius Loyola. Implicit obedience to the orders of the pope was a fundamental part of their institution. By their artful policy, their close union, their regular internal subordination, their unremitting attention to the affairs of the world, and their accommodating and infamous maxims of morality which prepared them for every indulgence and every compliance; they speedily became universally powerful, and ruled, at different periods, the measures of the principal courts of Europe.*

In the seventeenth century, though some of the Roman pontiffs rivalled in their pretensions the most ambitious of their predecessors, the papal authority in countries of the Romish communion was impaired by a distinction which princes began to establish between the church of Rome and the court of Rome; and by the denial of the pope's right of interference in the civil concerns of other sovereigns. Some exertions even of his spiritual power were boldly and successfully opposed by the Venetians, and by Louis XIV. The pontiffs appeared solicitous to balance their European losses by acquisitions in other parts of the globe. Their missionaries were numerous and indefatigable. Among these the Jesuits took the lead. In China, India, Japan, and Abyssinia, great multitudes became converts. Christianity, however, in the two latter countries was suppressed by political suspicion. From Abyssinia the missionaries were irrevocably excluded, A. D. 1634. About the same period a persecution, more barbarous than any recorded in history, exterminated the Christian faith in Japan. The modes of conversion employed by the Jesuits were loudly condemned by their hostile associates the Dominicans and the Fransiscans: and sometimes extorted marks of reluctant disapprobation from the pontiffs. The fact is, that the Jesuits proceeded in religion, as in other points, on the unchristian

* In speaking of popes, Jesuits, and other classes of men, the brevity of this historical review sometimes obliges me to notice them collectively, and in general terms The reader will remember that there have been among them many individuals, however deluded, of sincere piety.

principle, that the end sanctifies the means. They modelled Christianity to the taste of their converts ; and permitted them to retain, under a thin disguise, their favourite and even idolatrous customs. They scrupled no deceit to effect their object. Robert de Nobili, who conducted the celebrated Indian mission of Madura, disfiguring himself into the likeness of a Bramin, announced himself to the natives as such from a distant country ; produced a parchment writing, forged by himself in the ancient Indian character, which stated that the Bramins of Rome were older than those of India, and that the Jesuits were descended in a direct line from the god Bramah : and (as Jouvenci, a Jesuit, testifies in the history of his order) when questioned in an assembly of Bramins concerning the authenticity of the parchment, confirmed it upon oath. He gained immense numbers of proselytes. His successors continued the artifice ; and boldly denied themselves to be Europeans. During this century popery extended itself in America : while new colonies were at the same time founded in that continent by protestant settlers of various persuasions.

In the mean time violence and treachery were let loose against the protestants of Europe. In Austria and Bohemia the treaties which secured religious liberty were despised by the catholics, and every oppression was practised. The Austrian protestants yielded to violence : the Bohemians took up arms, and chose, A. D. 1619, the elector Palatine for their king. His defeat in the following year brought ruin on himself and his cause. The victorious emperor now hoped to subjugate Germany to Rome and himself. By the edict of restitution, issued A. D. 1629, he commanded the protestants to restore to the church of Rome all the possessions which they had acquired from it in the preceding century by the peace of religion. Gustavus Adolphus, king of Sweden, checked his career. After thirty years of war, the restitution-edict was abrogated, and the peace of religion renewed, A. D. 1648, by the treaty of Westphalia. But religious liberty was not restored to the Austrian and Bohemian protestants ; nor the whole of the Palatinate to its an-

cient sovereign. From A. D. 1671 to A. D. 1681, the protestants of Hungary were cruelly oppressed. Some years before, the Socinians had been condemned to capital punishment in Poland; and all the sect was driven in misery out of the country. And during the whole century the rest of the Polish protestants found that no treaty was regarded by the Catholics. The remains of the Waldenses in Piedmont were repeatedly persecuted with fire and sword by the dukes of Savoy. In England, an attempt was made, A. D. 1604, under the direction of Garnet, superior of the English Jesuits to destroy the king and the Parliament by gunpowder. The protestants of France, after sustaining many successive injuries, together with the loss, A. D. 1628, of their chief city Rochelle, which they had been authorised to fortify, were attacked in process of time by local and most savage persecution. The revocation of the edict of Nantes, by Louis XIV. A. D. 1685, crowned his guilt and their miseries. More than half a million sought refuge in other countries from the rage of an unrelenting soldiery: and nearly fifty thousand found an asylum in England. The faith of the reformed churches was likewise assailed by Romish writers, who published insinuating and delusive explanations of the tenets of popery. Among these authors the most eminent was Bossuet, bishop of Meaux; whose exposition, though now in high reputation among the catholics, was at first strongly censured by individuals and universities of that persuasion, and was disapproved and applauded by successive Popes. Some protestant authors were ensnared by a desire of Christian union into an improper approach to antichristian doctrines. Christina, queen of Sweden, and several German princes embraced in this country the Romish communion: but without effect as to the national religion of their subjects.*

* In Spain the spirit of popery, to which many Christians were sacrificed by the inquisition, fell with extreme fury on the Moriscoes, the descendants of the Saracens. These unhappy people, after experiencing the utmost perfidy and cruelty from Ferdinand, Charles V, and his successors, were now suddenly ex-

In the reign of Elizabeth, many of the English, who had fled to Geneva during the persecution under Mary, returned to England, with strong prepossessions in favour of Calvinistic doctrines and forms; and being dissatisfied with the established church, because, in their opinion, it was not formed after a pure model, produced a sect of non-conformists denominated Puritans. They were restless; the age was intolerant; the queen hostile and despotic in the use of prerogative: in consequence they were treated with harshness and injustice. From James, though the arrogant violence of the Scottish clergy of the day had rendered him a warm friend to episcopacy, they experienced greater humanity. In the reign of Charles I. they met with opposition and vexation from Laud, archbishop of Canterbury, who regarded them with horror. But their party gradually derived strength from the political measures of the king: and had a leading share in precipitating the kingdom into civil war. In the course of the conflict they were depressed and supplanted by the more recent sect of Independents; who disclaimed every form of union between churches, and assigned to each congregation the exclusive government of itself. Both puritans and independents harassed in every possible way the national church; and ultimately succeeded in abolishing episcopacy, and ejecting the episcopal clergy. Under Cromwell, who was alike averse to episcopacy and presbyterianism, the church of England was delivered to the management of a set of commissioners. It resumed, with the restoration of Charles II. its ancient form; and upwards of two thousand of the presbyterian clergy relinquished their cures in one day. In Scotland also, where Charles I. instigated by Laud, had attempted with equal impropriety and ill success to establish episcopacy by force, the church was now pla-

pelled, A. D. 1609, from Spain by Philip III. in the most barbarous manner; and set on shore, destitute of protection, on the coast of Africa, where more than a hundred thousand of them perished. See their whole history in Watson's Life of Philip III. Book 4th.

ced under the government of bishops. Charles II. whose profligacy would have disgraced any religion, was secretly a favourer or convert of the catholics. His successor was an avowed papist; and by the most flagrant attacks on the religious and civil liberties of Great Britain, laboured to accomplish the re-establishment of popery. The revolution, A. D. 1688, delivered the nation from the dread of arbitrary power and idolatrous superstition; and settled political and ecclesiastical freedom on so firm a base, that under the blessing of God they have remained stedfast unto this day. May this blessing long preserve them! The national church of Scotland was again restored to presbyterian government, so acceptable to that part of the island. But the episcopalian congregations still continue to be governed by a regular succession of bishops.

The catholic and the protestant churches were alike agitated in this century with internal controversies and dissensions. In the Romish communion the Dominicans and the Jesuits were engaged in furious disputes concerning the necessity and the nature of divine grace; and besieged the papal chair for a decision. But death or policy repeatedly prevented the pontiffs from committing themselves. Each party was thus at liberty to boast with equal loudness of possessing the secret approbation of popes. Soon afterwards the flame was rekindled by the popularity of a posthumous work of Jansenius, bishop of Ypres, favourable to the tenets of the Dominicans. Sophistry and invectives were arms common to both parties. To papal bulls, royal edicts, and troops of soldiers, which arranged themselves on the side of the Jesuits, the Jansenists opposed subtle distinctions, popular applause, and the fraudulent aid of pretended miracles. Among the protestants the new sect of Quakers arose in England. But the principal contests which troubled the peace of the reformed churches, were those which broke out between the Calvinists and the followers of Arminius of Leyden. After several conferences between the contending parties in Holland, the Arminians saw their tenets condemned, A. D. 1618, in a synod held at Dort, their civil rights suppres-

sed, their ministers silenced, and the disobedient congregations punished by fine, imprisonment, and exile. Some years afterwards they were recalled. But it is to be observed, that their theological system soon underwent a considerable change; and embraced many persons whose opinions respecting the necessity of the aid of divine grace and other fundamental doctrines of Christianity appear to have fallen far below the standard of the Gospel. It is the more necessary to attend to this circumstance, because the term Arminian is not uncommonly applied as descriptive of the church of England. As far as it indicates the rejection of the Calvinistic doctrines of predestination and reprobation by most of the members of that church, it is applied with justice; but it must not be used with a wider meaning.

Early in the eighteenth century, the Russian church, which is of the Greek communion, underwent a material alteration as to external form, by the suppression of the office of Patriarch, under Peter the Great; who thus became like the English monarch, head of the national church. He also abolished penal laws against Christians of other persuasions; and exerted himself to check superstition, and to enlighten the inconceivable ignorance of the clergy. But the radical depravation of Christianity by the grossest idolatry towards saints and pictures of saints still overspreads, amidst other inferior corruptions, the Russian empire. The Roman pontiffs in this age have been on the whole considerably superior in piety and learning to most of their predecessors. The intestine divisions in that church have continued. The breach between the Dominicans and the Jesuits remained unclosed: and the latter party obtained a signal triumph over the Jansenists, by procuring the papal condemnation, A. D. 1713, by the bull denominated Unigenitus, from the word with which it commences, of an hundred and one propositions, extracted from the annotations of Quenel, a celebrated Jansenist, on the New Testament. Cardinal de Noailles, however, archbishop of Paris, supported by numbers of his clergy zealous for the liberties of the Galli-

can church, steadily refused, in defiance of the indignation of the pontiff and of Louis XIV. to recognize the authority of the bull. The kingdom was divided into two parties. By the aid of penal inflictions and the violence of Louis, the Jesuits at length prevailed. But the downfall of the victors was at hand. A conspiracy for the assassination of the king of Portugal, A. D. 1758, under the guidance of some principal Jesuits, occasioned the expulsion of the whole order from that kingdom. The odium pursued them throughout Europe. In 1761 some fraudulent mercantile transactions, in which the Jesuits had been engaged, drew the attention in France of the civil power. In the following year the pernicious tendency of their writings furnished new charges. Their discussions at length dragged to light the hitherto concealed institute or rules of their order, replete with maxims subversive of social peace and of morality. Their colleges were seized; their effects were confiscated; the order was extinguished in France, and all its members were banished. In the Spanish empire, within which they had established in Paraguay an independent empire of their own, a similar fate overwhelmed them. And, finally, the suppression of the whole order was obtained, A. D. 1773, from the pontiff Clement XIV.

A storm was in the mean time gathering against Christianity itself. In England there had arisen a succession of sceptical or deistical writers, who had in various ways carried on, with little apparent concert, their attacks against the religion of Christ. Some assailed the outworks, some the strong holds; some proceeded openly; more, covertly and in disguise. If, on the one hand, they had in many instances weakened or subverted the faith of the ignorant, the unsuspecting, or the vicious; they had called forth, on the other, such exertions of piety and learning in the friends and for the vindication of Christianity, as in effect to have benefited the cause which they were solicitous to injure. Their publications speedily crossed the channel; and found on the continent, particularly in France, hands ready to sharpen and to brandish every weapon with

which they should be furnished. It now appears from an accumulation of unquestionable documents, and more especially from the acknowleged works and correspondence of Frederick king of Prussia; that Frederick, to whom the title of Great will henceforth be only a deeper brand of infamy; that the foreign enemies of the Gospel, far from limiting their efforts to desultory and unconnected attacks, have during many years been united in one firm, widely extended, and regularly-organised confederation, for the express purpose of exterminating by fraud and by force the name of Christianity from the earth. In the doctrinal corruption, and the degrading superstition by which the religion of Christ was disfigured and polluted in the countries where their principal machinations were pursued; and in the political circumstances of that kingdom, where the meditated explosion took place; they found advantages almost beyond the power of computation. Of the events which have recently passed, and are still passing before our eyes, the termination and the consequences are yet in the bosom of Providence.—Judging from the present appearances of worldly affairs, and I think we may humbly add, from the word of prophecy; there seems little reason to believe that even that corrupt form of Christianity, on which the blow has fallen, will prove to have received either a mortal or a permanent wound; a wound sufficient to prevent it from exercising at a future period, by a final trial, of short and limited duration, but of unparalleled severity, the faith and constancy of the universal protestant church. But with respect to genuine Christianity, that religion "against which the "gates of hell shall not prevail,"* we know that every effort of human guile and human malice is but an additional link in that chain of events by which the enemies of God are unconciously forwarding his purposes: an additional step in that determined progression, by which, amidst the shock of nations and the convulsion of empires, "the kingdoms of this world shall become "the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and "He shall reign for ever and ever."†

* Matt. xvi. 18. † Rev. xi. 15.

Throughout the course of this century, and even to the present moment of its awful close, the church of these kingdoms has been blessed with security and peace. Of the other classes and sects of Christians in this country, some, as the Methodists, generally profess to remain united to the national establishment: some as the Anabaptists, dissent from it only in few points of doctrine or discipline: some, as those who without reason ascribe exclusively to themselves the title of Unitarians, recede in most fundamental points to the utmost extreme of separation. Concerning the distinguishing tenets of these and other sects it becomes me to be silent. The number and the subdivisions of the sects in question, and the duty of describing, if at all, with fulness and precision, opinions differing from my own, would necessarily lead to an extent of detail inconsistent with the brevity of my general plan. Those opinions may easily be learned from the discourses or the writings of the individuals who hold them. Yet I would not willingly dismiss the subject without pressing the importance of warm and habitual regard to two momentous and most consistent branches of Christian duty: the obligation, on the one hand, of "earnestly "contending for the faith which was once delivered to the saints;"* and on the other of "putting on charity, "which is the bond of perfectness,"† and of habitually evincing the spirit of the apostolic prayer; "grace be "with all those," all of every description "who love our "Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity‡.

* Jude, 3. † Coloss. iii. 14. ‡ Ephesians, vi. 24.

CHAPTER XII.

ON FORMS OF CHURCH-GOVERNMENT AND ECCLESIASTICAL ESTABLISHMENTS.

IT is an apostolical direction, that a Christian should always be prepared to give "a reason of the "hope that is in him." The ground of the injunction extends to all institutions closely connected with his faith. My present purpose, therefore, is to assist the judgment of the younger part of my readers, by endeavouring briefly to satisfy them, that reasons, substantial reasons, may be advanced in support of the ecclesiastical institutions of their own country.

In every community or body of men, civil or ecclesiastical, some species of government is requisite for the good of the whole. Otherwise, all is irregularity, confusion, and interminable contention. How then, in any particular country, is the Christian church to be governed? "Every separate congregation," answers the independent, "is a sovereign church; amenable to no "extrinsic jurisdiction, and entitled to no jurisdiction "over other churches."—"That mode of government," replies the presbyterian, "is calculated to destroy uni- "ty, co-operation, and concord among Christians. All "congregations within the same state, which agree in "doctrine, ought to be under the general superinten- "dance of a representative assembly, composed of their "ministers and delegates."—"Such a representative "assembly," replies the episcopalian, "wants vigour "and dispatch; and is perpetually open to tumult, par- "tiality, and faction. Divide the country into dioce- "ses; and station a bishop in each, armed with suffi- "cient authority, and restrained by adequate laws from "abusing it. Such was the apostolical government of "the church: such" perhaps he adds, "was the govern- "ment enjoined on succeeding ages."—"Away!"

cries the papist, " with these treasonable discussions. " The Pope, the successor of St. Peter, is, by divine " right, the only source of ecclesiastical power; the uni- " versal monarch of the universal church."

Writing as I am, to protestants, I may pass by the claim of the successor of St. Peter. But the concluding words of the episcopalian are of prime importance. If Christ, or his apostles, enjoined the uniform adopted of episcopacy; the question is decided. Did Christ then or his disciples deliver or indirectly convey such an injunction? This topic has been greatly controverted. The fact appears to be this: that our Saviour did not pronounce upon the subject; that the apostles uniformly established a bishop in every district, as soon as the church in that district became numerous; and thus clearly evinced their judgment as to the form of ecclesiastical government most advantageous, at least in those days to Christianity: but that they left no command, which rendered episcopacy universally indispensable in future times, if other forms should evidently promise, through local opinions and circumstances, greater benefit to religion. Such is the general sentiment of the present church of England on the subject.*

* I have pleasure in quoting on this point the words of two eminent prelates and defenders of the church of England, one at the beginning, the other at the end, of the present century. " Ecclesias Reformatas, etsi in aliquibus a nostrâ Anglicanâ dis- " sentientes, libenter amplector. Optarem equidem regimen " episcopale benè temperatum, et ab omni injusta dominatione " sejunctum, quale apud nos optinet, (et si quid ego in his re- " bus sapiam, ab ipso apostolorum ævo in ecclesia receptum fuerit,) et ab iis omnibus fuisset retentum: nec despero quin " aliquando restitutum, si non ipse videam, at posteri videbunt. " Interim absit ut ego tam ferrei pectoris sim, ut ob ejusmodi " defectum (sic mihi absque omni invidia appellare liceat) ali- " quas earum a communione nostra abscindendas credam; aut, " cum quibusdam furiosis inter nos scriptoribus, eas nulla vera ac " valida sacramenta habere, adeòque vix christianos esse, pronun- " tiem." Letter from Wake, arch bishop of Canterbury, to

That the two orders of priests and deacons, into which, subordinately to bishops, the whole body of English clergy is distributed, were instituted by the apostles, is a fact too plain to require a formal proof. The deacons were inferior to the priests; they were authorised to baptise; they assisted in the administration of the sacrament, but were not permitted to consecrate the bread and wine: and they were specially entrusted with the care of the poor. The several functions of our priests and deacons are in no essential point different from the corresponding offices of similar ministers of the church in primitive times. The silence of the Scriptures, and the usages of the ancient church,

Mr. Le Clerc, published in the appendix to Maclaine's Translation of Mosheim, 8vo. vol. vi. p. 124. "We may safely challenge the enemies of episcopacy to produce evidence of the existence of a single ancient independent church, which was not governed by a bishop: I mean after it was fairly established.—But though I flatter myself that I have proved episcopacy to be an apostolical institution; yet I readily acknowledge, that there is no precept in the New Testament, which commands that every church should be governed by bishops. No church can exist without some government. But though there must be rules and orders for the proper discharge of the offices of public worship: though there must be fixed regulations concerning the appointment of ministers; and though a subordination among them is expedient in the highest degree; yet it does not follow that all these things must be precisely the same in every Christian country. They may vary with the other varying circumstances of human society; with the extent of a country, the manners of its inhabitants, the nature of its civil government, and many other peculiarities which might be specified. As it has not pleased our Almighty Father to prescribe any particular form of civil government for the security of temporal comforts to his rational creatures: so neither has he prescribed any particular form of ecclesiastical polity as absolutely necessary to the attainment of eternal happiness. The Scriptures do not prescribe any definite form of church-government."—Bishop Pretyman's Elements of Christian Theology, vol. ii. p. 383. 396. 398.

sanctioned the appointment of archbishops, archdeacons, and other ecclesiastical officers; whenever the appointment appeared, as the numbers of Christians were multiplied, beneficial to the interests of religion. If any state should be of opinion, that to give to some of its leading ecclesiastics a share in the legislative authority would also advance the interests of religion; there is no scriptural objection to the plan. Thus England stations its bishops in the upper house of parliament. Observe, however, that the clergy in England, form not a distinct body from their fellow-subjects. They are amenable to the same laws: they pay the same contribution to taxes: they suffer the same punishment for crimes. The property which they possess as clergymen, from the bishop to the curate, is the salary of an office: and the succession to it is open to any family in the kingdom.

But why are the clergy to have salaries?—Why? Upon the scriptural principle of universal justice; that "the labourer is worthy of his reward;" that he who labours should live by his labour; that he who employs his time and his talents for the benefit of others should receive from them an adequate retribution. Is not this general principle applicable to the clergy! Jesus Christ himself has applied it to them: "The Lord hath ordained, that they which preach the Gospel should "live of the Gospel."*

But, although the clergy ought to be supported, why should not they be left, as in apostolical times, to the voluntary support of their congregations? Because in these days, voluntary support, it is to be feared, would too often be no support. Through the affectionate zeal of the Christians towards their pastors in early ages, legal provisions were needless: and if they had been necessary, they could not have been obtained from Pagan law-givers. At present, such affectionate zeal would be very rare. Even by many of the English dissenters, whom the existence of an established church of another persuasion naturally stimulates to exertions in behalf of their own clergy; the inadequate payment of their mi-

* 1 Cor. ix. 13.

nisters is lamented. The law, therefore, interposes with respect to the national church to prevent the many injuries to religion, which would result from general poverty in the clergy: and the temptations to remedy that poverty by conciliating accommodation of doctrine and practice to the humour of wealthy subscribers.

But the revenues of the church are excessive! The great Lord Chatham was not of your opinion. "The "church," said he, "God bless it! has but a pittance." Calculate the whole annual revenue of the church, and the number of the clergy: compute what the former would produce, if equally divided, to each of the latter: consider the necessary expences of a clerical education: recollect that a clergyman is properly excluded from ordinary occupations and their profits; and you will not think that Lord Chatham was in the wrong. But their revenues are unequally divided! Are you sure that religion would derive advantage from their equalization?

But tythes are an objectionable mode of paying the clergy!—It is true: and what mode of payment would be unobjectionable? What, however, are your objections to tythes? They impede agricultural improvements; and they occasion dissensions between the clergy and their parishioners. I admit that your first objection is not without its weight; though I believe that weight to be commonly overrated. For it is not according to human nature, that men should very frequently decline to improve their estates nine pounds a year, because another person would be entitled to the tenth pound. Even if the owner, by expending the same sum in another way, could secure the tenth pound to himself; the satisfaction of improving his own permanent landed property would in most cases turn the scale. The second objection is, I confess, so forcible, that I have only to avow my sincere regret that no practicable means of providing for the clergy less objectionable than tythes have yet been discovered and proposed. But when I make this avowal, justice not professional prejudice, requires me to express my conviction, that in by far the greater number of instances the dissensions which we agree in deploring, arise

from selfish opposition of those who are to pay tythes, not from the exorbitancy of him who demands them. Of seven hundred suits on account of tythes brought by the clergy into the court of Exchequer, from the year 1660 to 1713, six hundred were decided in their favour.* If a new search down to the present day were made into the records of the Exchequer, the result, I apprehend, would bear a testimony no less honourable. I take no credit for peculiar moderation in the clergy: but the nature of the case speaks for itself. The clergyman, foreseeing that the interest of himself and of his family in the profits of his living terminates, at the latest, with his life, is much more likely to relinquish a just demand, through a dread of an expensive contest, than to appeal to the law in support of an unreasonable claim. And his usual inability to fight the purse of a wealthy lord of a manor, or that which is replenished by the combination of inferior proprietors, inculcates on him the same lesson.

But is it not invidious, is it not unjust, to take tythes from the property of dissenters, and to give them to clergymen of another persuasion? A little explanation may convince you, that there is no injustice nor invidious intention in the matter. In the first place, the tythes are not required from the dissenter as such: they are an outgoing from the land (or what amounts to the same thing, the produce of the land) which he happens to possess. When he or his ancestor bought the land: he bought it proportionally cheaper, because it was subject to that outgoing. In the second place, whenever the legislature imposes a tax for the purpose of applying its produce to an object which it deems of national utility; the tax must be imposed on the country at large, though many individuals may think the object to which it is to be applied useless or prejudicial. On no other principle could public measures be conducted. Were a land-tax imposed for the prosecution of a war; would you exempt the land of those who disapproved the war? Or if the legislature believed that the institution of a medical board would be of national utility, and should lay a general house tax for its support; would it be un-

* See Archbishop Secker's Charges, p. 129.

just to require the tax from householders who should think unfavourably of the institution? Were the legislature to prohibit those householders from employing any other than the established physician, the case would be very different. But if it leaves them, though necessarily subject to the general tax, at liberty to employ any physician of their own; they cannot complain of being invidiously or unjustly treated. The case of tythes is exactly parallel. The legislature deeming the maintenance of a national church essential to the public good, and the only method of securing the universal and regular performance of public worship in a suitable manner throughout the kingdom, imposed, and continues, for its support, a tax on land, to be paid by the owner, whoever he may happen to be. But with the conscience of the owner it interferes not: it leaves him at liberty to attend the national church, or any other church which he may prefer. The temptations to pretended dissent, the complicated and endless collusions which must ensue were the legislature to exempt any man from tythes who should profess not to belong to the national church, would render such a plan subversive both of the national church and of sincerity.

But why is the national church hedged round with creeds and articles? Because otherwise it either could not exist at all, or could not exist with public utility. Would you have a pulpit open to be filled in the morning by a protestant, in the afternoon by a catholic; today by a follower of Socinius; next week by a disciple of Swedenborg? Would a congregation be edified and confirmed in "the truth as it is in Jesus," by hearing the fundamental doctrines of Christianity alternately asserted, questioned, denied? In primitive times, when a variety of doctrines sprang up among Christians, particular churches perceived the necessity of manifesting their opinions by drawing up creeds and confessions of faith. At the reformation, the church of England, like other protestant churches, added to the creeds adopted in its congregations a summary of its faith, contained in thirty-nine articles, and directed them to be presented for the assent of any person who should apply to be

admitted to the office of minister in the church, as a test by which it might be known whether he accorded with the doctrines of the church. If he did not, he was of course an unfit person to be appointed one of its public teachers. The same practice is continued for the same reason.

Is the ecclesiastical establishment then, it will finally be said, free from attendant imperfections and misconduct? It is free from neither. Shall I express the answer in other words? It is a human institution administered by men. Every work of man is tinctured with imperfection; every proceeding of man with misconduct. But what is the rational line of argument? Take the most obvious examples, civil government, and apply it. A king may be oppressive. Is a republic less likely to be oppressive? An hereditary crown may be devolved into unworthy hands. Did the condition of Poland before its downfall recommend an elective monarchy? A parliament may be misguided or corrupted. Would you be ruled without a parliament by the despotism of an individual or a mob? The utmost to be expected in a human institution is, that the advantages should greatly preponderate, and that disadvantages should be open to consideration and remedy. Try the ecclesiastical establishment and the administration of it by that rule. If afterwards you still feel a doubt remaining, remember with gratitude to heaven that you live under the legislature of a free country; a legislature empowered to apply a remedy in its wisdom to any of those defects, which according to the common fate of things below, may adhere to its noblest works.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

IF the summary accounts, which the preceding chapters furnish concerning the several subjects of which they treat, have tended to evince the goodness and the providence of God to establish the truth of Christianity, and of the protestant faith; to explain the nature and the utility of our ecclesiastical establishment: the conviction thus produced may justly derive additional confirmation from every enquiry into the detail of those topics, of which only the leading features have been sketched. The prosecution of such enquiries, as the source of most important knowledge, and of stedfast, rational, and uncontaminated faith, it is difficult to recommend with adequate solicitude. May the reader prosecute them, under the divine blessing, with the attention which they deserve; and with a disposition adapted to the discovery and to the love of truth. In the mean time he will receive, I trust with candour some concluding, and, perhaps, not unnecessary observations relative to Christian faith and Christian practice.

I. Young persons who, though little if at all instructed in the evidences and groundwork of Christianity, have been accustomed, during their education, to the society, the language, and the public worship of Christians, usually come forth into active life, not only with full persuasion of the truth of their religion, but with scarcely a suspicion that there can be many persons in this country who doubt or disbelieve it. An avowed sceptic, or unbeliever, is in their eyes a phenomenon like a comet. And every one who is not a notorious sceptic or unbeliever they regard, as in faith at least, though perhaps not in practice, a good Christian. It may be well for them to know, without waiting until the lesson be inculcated by longer experience of the world, that

they have formed a scanty conception of a number of those, who take little pains to conceal their scepticism, or their unbelief; and that there exists in the middle and higher classes of society a large description of persons, who, without openly rejecting Christianity, can by no means be said to believe it. That the number of those who do not embrace the gospel affords no argument, either against the truth of the religion or the goodness of God, is a fact which I have already had occasion to explain.* The evidence which God has supplied on behalf of the religion of his Son is wisely adapted to the situation of moral agents, of beings in a state of trial. It is not instantaneously overpowering, irresistably bearing down alike the assent of the prejudiced and the candid, the careless and the considerate. It solicits examination; it demands fair enquiry: and the fair enquirer it rewards with conviction. They who will not enquire, or who enquire not rationally and fairly, deservedly remain in their blindness. This observation belongs to the persons recently described as not openly rejecting Christianity, no less than to its avowed opposers. They came forward into life, as you perhaps are coming forward, with an extremely superficial knowledge of their religion, but without any doubt of its divine authority. In no long time they began to hear indirect cavils and witty sarcasms aimed against detached passages in the Scriptures; intimations dropped with a significant air of sagacity about priestcraft; and expressions of wonder that the indulgence of natural inclinations should ever be a sin. Their ears, at first a little shocked, soon became familiar to the sound; and learned by degrees, not to be offended at plainer language. Direct charges of absurdity, falsehood, and imposture advanced, first against the Old Testament, then against the New, though they did not produce conviction, were heard without emotion. In the mean time the prejudices of education in

* In the concluding pages of ch. 6. It may perhaps be proper to add that the same subject is further noticed in the Enquiry into the Duties of Men, &c. 4th ed. vol. ii. p. 515—520

favor of religion, for in these persons, uninstructed in the grounds of Christianity, belief was nothing more than a prejudice, were gradually loosened. Habits of life too, perhaps, were formed, which rendered the truth of Christianity, and the consequent certainty of future punishment for vice, highly undesirable. However that might be, the man grew absorbed in the business or the trifles of the world. Political pursuits, professional occupations, his regiment, or his vessel, or his compting-house, or his shop; or his hounds and horses, his gun, his company at home, his visits abroad, filled up his whole time. Religion grew more and more foreign to his thoughts. Not that he decidedly disbelieved it. He felt, when it crossed his mind, doubts of its truth, and a secret wish that it might not be true: he felt the most preposterous of all persuasions, that possibly there might be *something* of truth in it, but that certainly there was much less than was represented: but he had not thought on the subject sufficiently to disbelieve it altogether, or to have any clear opinion. Yet perhaps he was now and then seen at church; at least in the country, when he had nothing to do: for he was desirous of preserving a respectable appearance; and he was convinced that religion, true or false, should be encouraged among the lower people to keep them in order, particularly in these days of Jacobinism. Suspicions too of the possibility of the truth of Christinity had still hung about him: and at times he had half intended to examine into the matter. Once or twice a fit of sickness, or a domestic affliction, had encreased his surmises: and he had determined that at some future convenient opportunity he would endeavour to satisfy himself. But the convenient opportunity never happened to arrive. Days, months, and years found him occupied as before: and death surprised him at last in his grey hairs, uncertain of his faith. I do not speak lightly when I express my apprehensions that of the leading features in this picture many originals are to be found. The guilt of such conduct, like all other guilt, may be diminished or aggravated by attendant circumstances. How is it in the present case? Was the object in ques-

tion unimportant? The eternal salvation of the individual was at stake. But had he means of information, and encouragements to use them? He lived in an enlightened age: in a protestant country; he lived where the Scriptures were open, and enquiry free, to every man, where the most eminent learning and talents have devoted themselves to the defence of Christianity; where religion is publicly reverenced, and genuine piety the most honourable distinction.

To set before you this example, is to warn you against its dangerous contagion; and to impress you with the duty of warning, on fit occasions, and with the earnestness of a Christian, those whom it may be likely to infect.

As long as you remain upon earth, a scene of probation, it is unreasonable to expect that your faith no less than your conduct should be subjected to trial. When you have been convinced on rational grounds that Christianity is true: be not hastily staggered by slight difficulties, which Providence allows to exist probably for the very purpose of exercising your faith. I do not mean that you should neglect them. Bring them to the test of enquiry. Count as nothing the peremptory assertions, with which they are advanced; the conclusions sophistically and dogmatically deduced from them; the sneers and the contempt aimed at all persons who acquiesce not in those conclusions. Examine the difficulty itself with care: consult those who are most conversant with the subject. You will either find the difficulty vanish, perhaps that it even affords a new attestation to Christianity :* or that whatever may yet be un-

* Thus the boasted antiquity of Indian Chronology, whichhas been so often triumphantly announced as a conclusive proof of the falsehood of the Mosaic history, is not only disproved by the labours of Mr. Maurice and Sir William Jones; but is shewn to bear unexpected testimony to the truth of that history. For the very earliest period of that antiquity, as recorded in the most sacred book of the Bramins, produces a narrative, which no man who remembers his Bible can read without perceiving it to be a transcript of the singular transactions of Noah and his three sons.

explained to you weighs less, when compared with the evidence of Christianity, than a grain of sand in the balance against a mountain.

Another example of the futility of an argument still heard against the Mosaic Chronology may suggest to the reader some useful inferences with respect to other arguments and theories now afloat.

Mr. Brydone, in his Travels through Sicily and Malta, writes thus concerning the neighbourhood of Etna. "Near to a vault, "which is now thirty-feet below ground, and has probably been "a burial-place, there is a draw-well; where there are several "strata of lavas with earth to a considerable thickness over the "surface of each stratum. Recupero has made use of this as an "argument to prove the great antiquity of the eruptions of his "mountain. For if it requires 2000 years or upwards to form "but a scanty soil on the surface of a lava," (a calculation framed, I believe, from the eruption of Vesuvius which destroyed Herculaneum,) "there must have been more than that space of "time betwixt each of the eruptions which have formed these "strata. But what shall we say of a pit they sunk near to Jaci "of a great depth? They pierced through seven distinct lavas, "one under the other, the surfaces of which were parallel, and "most of them covered with a thick bed of rich earth. Now, "(says he) the eruption which formed the lowest of these lavas, if "we may be allowed to reason from analogy, must have flowed "from the mountain at least 14,000 years ago. Recupero tells "me he is exceedingly embarrassed by these discoveries in writ-"ing the history of the mountain: that Moses hangs like a dead "weight upon him, and blunts all his zeal for enquiry: for that "really he has not the conscience to make his mountain so young "as that prophet makes the world. What do you think of these "sentiments from a Roman catholic divine? The Bishop who "is strenuously orthodox—for it is an excellent see—has already "warned him to be upon his guard, and not to pretend to be a "better natural historian than Moses: nor to presume to urge any "thing that may in the smallest degree be deemed contradictory "to his sacred authority." Vol i. p. 140—142. To this argument a satisfactory answer has been given: that different lavas

On the subject of faith I have yet to submit an additional observation. You will meet among believers in Christianity with persons who appear to think; that if by

may be mouldered into soil, by the action of the air, within very different periods proportioned to the hardness of the lava: and that these supposed beds of rich earth are nearly or altogether beds of ashes, which might immediately succeed the lava, and be almost immediately fit for cultivation: and that it is possible that several alternative strata of lava and ashes might be formed even during the same eruption. The material parts of this answer are confirmed by the observations of Swinburne. (Travels in the Two Sicilies, 2d edit. vol. iv. p. 141.) who incidentally says, that the smaller mountains thrown up by eruptions on the flanks of Etna are *soon* covered with wood planted with vines: and that while a a lava which flowed in 1669 had not yet a blade of grass or a fibre of moss on its surface, another which had flowed only 20 years ago, was already in many places covered with lichens. The Sicilian bishop then seems to have had better reasons for his orthodoxy than the excellence of his see. But there is a decisive witness against Mr. Brydone, who, as far as I know, has not yet been produced: I mean Mr. Brydone himself. Speaking of the country near Hybla, (vol. i. p. 172, 173,) he gives the following recital.

" It was so *celebrated for its fertility*, and particularly for its ho-
" ney, that it was called Mel Passi, till it was overwhelmed by
" the lava of Etna: *and having then become totally barren*, by a kind
" of pun its name was changed to Mal Passi. *In a second eruption by*
" *a shower of ashes from the mountain, it soon resumed its antient beauty*
" *and fertility:* and for many years was called Bel Passi. Last
" of all, in 1669, it was again laid under an ocean of fire and re-
" duced to the most wretched sterility; since which time, it is
" known again by its second appellation of Mal Passi. How-
" ever, the lava, in its course over this beautiful country, has
" left several little islands or hillocks, just enough to skew what
" it formerly was. These make a singular appearance, in all the
" bloom of luxuriant vegetation, surrounded and rendered almost
" inaccessible by large fields of black and rugged lava."—" The
" first eruption which destroyed the country of Mel Passi is of

forced explanations they can represent some scriptural narration as an allegory, or pare away the corner of a miracle; they lighten the difficulties of religion to reasoning believers and unbelievers. The attempt, however well intended, is palpably most absurd. Miracles are the foundation of Christianity. The Scriptural history is a history of miracles. What if one miracle out of an hundred could be solved into natural causes? Would those who were staggered by an hundred be more willing, is it reasonable that they should be more willing, to credit the ninety-nine? Receive with submission the history of mankind as it is in Scripture, and the Christian faith "as it is in Jesus." In your present stage of existence there will necessarily be parts of the Divine councils and dispensations, which you "see as through "a glass darkly."* Why needs your faith to be troubled, be the amount somewhat less or more?

II. That practice is Christian practice, which proceeds from Christian motives. He, who performs the duties of morality, because he sees that it is the custom to perform them, is a punctual imitator; and may be destitute of religion. He, who performs them for the sake of worldly interest, is a prudent man; and may be an unprincipled hypocrite. He,

"very old date. It destroyed particularly two noble churches, "regretted much on account of three statues in them, which "were reckoned the most perfect in the island.—They have been "searched for in vain." p. 174. I have examined several authors without success, to discover the date of this first eruption. By the particulars, however, which Mr. Brydone specifies concerning the churches, it must have been very far posterior to the Christian æra: and apparently must have been subsequent to the recovery of Sicily from the Mahometans in the eleventh century; as it seems impossible to suppose that *statues* in churches should escape their fury throughout a period of nearly two hundred and fifty years, during which they were masters of the island. At any rate there cannot be a more complete demolition of the calculations of Recupero, than that which Mr. Brydone here furnishes unawares.

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

who is observant of such of them as the laws of honour condescend to sanction, is "a man of honour;" and may be a villain. He, who in conformity to the dictates of custom or of prudence, (I speak not of honour, for it meddles not with the subject,) attends to the outward duties of Christian worship, has no claim to the reward of a Christian. Numbers belonging to one or other of these descriptions you will hear celebrated in the world as most respectable persons: for, "man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."* Leave such characters, for even yet they may be awakened and reclaimed, to the forbearence and mercy of an offended God: but make it the business of your life not to be like to them. Love and gratitude to God and your Redeemer must be your ruling principle, if you are really a Christian. Every duty which you perform on that principle, your God and Redeemer will reward. For any duty which you perform on some other principle, on what pretence can you expect a reward from them?

The ways of religion "are ways of pleasantness: and all her paths are peace."† Unquestionably they are. They may be intricate, and craggy, and strewed with thorns: but they are surrounded with "joy unspeakable and full of glory;"‡ with the peace of God which "passeth all understanding."§ But do you forget that there will be intricacies, craggy obstacles, and thorns? Do you imagine, that after all that Christ has done, nothing on your part is necessary for the attainment of salvation? Or do you think that whatever you may have to do, the Divine grace, promised to fervent prayer, will enable you to perform without difficulty? Why then do the Scriptures speak of the life of a Christian as a warfare? Why do they speak of "denying yourself;" of "taking up the cross;" of "crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts;" of "wrestling against principalities and powers of darkness;" of "putting on the whole armour of God, that you may be

* 1 Sam. xvi. 7. † Prov. iii. 17. ‡ 1 Pet. i. 8.
§ Phil. iv. 7.

"able to stand against the wiles of the devil?" If, with the assistance which God has promised to afford, you will not manfully "fight the good fight of faith:" if you will not watchfully pursue, through whatever intricacies, the path of duty; if you will not strenuously labour to surmount the obstacles which impede your Christian course; if you will not patiently and cheerfully sustain the thorns with which the ways of religion are strewed: if you will not "endure hardness," call not yourself "a "good soldier of Jesus Christ."*—"The Captain of "your salvation was made perfect through sufferings."† He suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps.‡ He may call you, as he did his primitive servants, to "resist" his enemies and those of your soul even "unto blood."§ You are not the faithful servant of Christ, unless you are wholly his servant; prepared to relinquish all things, to bear all things, for him. He calls you, and every one of his servants, to resist and overcome "the world:" its ridicule no less than its applause, its smiles no less than its frowns, its allurements no less than its indignation. Try then habitually the principles on which you act, the line of conduct which you pursue, the ends at which you aim, not by the rule of worldly custom, of worldly interest, of worldly praise; but by the Gospel of Christ. Ask yourself with respect to every undertaking, with respect to every mode of proceeding and every disposition of heart with which you prosecute that undertaking, whether Christ on his throne of judgment will approve it. If you cannot answer that question to the satisfaction of your conscience, desist: whatever advantage you abandon, whatever detriment, whatever scorn, you incur, desist. "What shall it profit you, if you gain "the whole world," all its wealth, all its honours, all its pleasures, all its praise, "and lose your own soul?"‖ Would you confess Christ in the face of persecution and death? Confess Him then in the face of smaller

* 2 Tim. ii. 3. † Heb. ii. 10. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 21.
§ Heb. xii. 4. ‖ Mark, viii. 36.

evils, of smaller sacrifices. Hear and remember throughout life his own words : "Whosoever shall confess me "before men, him will I confess also before my Father "which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me "before men, him will I also deny before my Father "which is in heaven."*

* Matt. x. 32, 33.

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